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MicroGame 2...

CHITIN: I

THE HARVEST WARS

Call it summer. There are seven seasons on this world...but now is the time of harvest. The dun-colored workers leave the hive, moving into the valleys to gather the crops.

But other hives want those crops, too. A horde of gleaming fighters — spiked travesties of the busy workers — tears into their midst. Then the counterattack comes, and warriors rend warriors. The small, spidery commanders are as careless of their own lives as they are of their soldiers'. Losing a few units doesn't matter. Nothing matters except victory, and the food victory brings.

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Game design by Howard Thompson; illustrated by Paul Jaquays

Chitin is a tactical version of Metagaming's upcoming *Hymenoptera*. Intelligent insects war for space and food, breeding ever-more-fearsome warriors. The objective is to bring back Harvest Chits — or enemy bodies.

The Hive must eat...

MicroGame 4...

WARPWAR

WARPWAR is a game of interstellar maneuver and tactical combat. The players design their own ships, giving each its own offensive, defensive, and movement capability. Ships move through space — or jump along the warplines that connect certain stars — to gain control of enemy base stars.

WARPWAR uses a unique *diceless* combat system. When ships clash, each player selects movement and combat power allocations for each of his units. Cross-reference determines what damage is done to each ship. No chance is involved...you must *outguess* your enemy.

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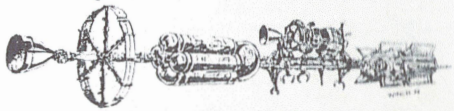

Game design by Howard Thompson; illustrated by Winchell Chung

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THE SPACE GAMER NO. 12

JULY-AUGUST

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WHERE WE'RE GOING

Well, I know I said WWG would be gone last issue. As it turns out we've got more to say than ever. This issue starts Steve's game designer's column which will be devoted to games in various stages of design. WWG will cover other matters and looks like it will continue. I won't get out of writing it, or putting thoughts in order.

First order of business is our decision to discontinue sale of other publishers' products. We may stock selected games that are real standouts for TSG subscribers only. But, our standard service of selling SF&F games by others will be discontinued. This decision has been in the works almost from the time we started the practice. Our 'cover-all' approach in sales with the discounts for TSG subscribers has been popular and we know some will miss it. Our reasons for dropping other publishers' games are good ones.

1. Quality of other games we've carried has been sporadic. We can't screen everything adequately and readers gripe just as much no matter who published a bummer. Selling marginal games by others hurts OUR reputation.
2. Delivery from others has been erratic to non-existent. Those waiting for Star Empires or who got caught in the White Bear & Red Moon out-of-print bind will agree. Our small servicing staff finds work multiplied when other publishers pass on their availability problems to us.
3. Price changes and adjustments by other publishers cause more poor service and wasted time. When we tell readers prices have changed it slows up everything. We have to know prices well in advance since ads have to go out well in advance of appearance. We aren't accepting ANY more orders for Star Empires. The delivery and price increase problems have caused us to quit on SE completely. This is only one example.

TSG will continue full coverage of all SF&F gaming. In fact, you'll start seeing more improvements in service items like news and plugs. There will also be a continuing large number of reviews.

The best TSG news is that we keep our increased page count and color cover while dropping back to the $1 per issue cost. This has been made possible by an increase in circulation and a decision to put a bit more budget into each issue. TSG doesn't make a profit but we do keep it near break even. As circulation rises, improvements become possible.

I guess the main reason for dropping other's products wasn't even mentioned above. We're going to put all our time into our own activities. We'll watch what others do and report it. But, we will spend our full effort on Metagaming, doing our own thing. I think we'll all be happier for it.

As this is written, MELEE is being shipped out, and WARPWAR is rapidly coming to completion. We have an ad for WARPWAR elsewhere and it probably isn't to early for you to order. September 1 is the projected date and it will probably be a bit ahead of that.

The computer? It's waiting on a move so there's some place to put it. The cash to cover that project is pretty much in hand in our savings. It looks like our Patron Subscribers will have made the difference in the computer. Our Patron Subscribers will also get first crack at playtesting computer games by mail. After the computer has 'paid back' savings we'll use our Patron funds for other special projects. The way it's working out, our Patrons will provide a special fund that will let us do about one neat thing a year, we otherwise wouldn't get to do. Our Patrons will also get first crack at some things, which is only fair.

YOU CAN HELP US GROW, as many already have, by letting stores in your area know you like our games. We send some freebies to stores when you send us their name to whet their interest. In particular, we find stores doing very well with the Microgames. We'll have a display box for the micros by this fall to help stores display them to advantage. We are right on target for tripling MGC/TSG this year which is good for us all. H.T.

DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

The big news this month is MELEE. As advertised in TSG 11, it's a fantasy MicroGame for archaic weapons combat. It's standardized on a hex grid, with each counter representing one man, animal, or monster. What you DIDN'T read in the last TSG (we weren't ready to spill the beans) is that MELEE is the first component of an entirely new fantasy-role-playing system. The overall name for the system is THE FANTASY TRIP. We think it'll be the next evolutionary step in fantasy gaming...bringing Order to Chaos, one might say. It's our most ambitious project yet.

THE FANTASY TRIP started as an attempt to design a more playable FRP game system. We wanted well-organized rules, streamlined action, and all the bugs out. THE FANTASY TRIP has evolved into much more. The first large segment - LABYRINTH - will give you subterranean adventure, monsters, magic, and the rest of the 'standard' fantasy-game material. The main innovations here are play-aids, clean rules, and an integrated hex movement/combat system that works. Branching off from LABYRINTH are the other components.

WIZARD is the magic equivalent of MELEE. Where MELEE gives you a preview of the hack-it-out combat, WIZARD will be a stand-alone game of sorcerous battle. Both are entirely compatible with the THE FANTASY TRIP's overall system...they're PART of it. In other words, you'll have nothing to unlearn when the big game is out. These two segments give you the melee-scale combat you'll need when things get sticky in the big game. The MELEE/WIZARD system will eliminate arguments over the tactical arrangements of characters and "who can do what and when."

A "wargame" version of THE FANTAST TRIP is also in the works. It, too, will be fully compatible with the role-playing system. You'll get a map of part of the TFT world, Cidri, plus the counters to play compaign games - and leader counters to represent your role-playing characters. Included will be "straight" set-up-and-play scenarios...AND rules to let you take your role-playing characters' wealth to build forts, castles, and armies.

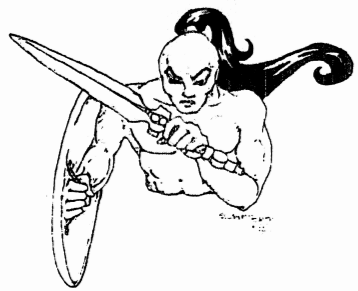
The Monster Book will come out as a supplement to THE FANTASY TRIP. It will contain some advanced rules - plus the largest monster/creature/vermin list yet assembled for any game anywhere. It won't be "just another supplement" - it'll be largely compiled from material YOU send in. Right. We plan to include (with suitable editing) the best of the nasties sent in by gamers. AND you'll be credited - by name - right there with your contribution. We know we don't have a monopoly on ideas, so we plan to pick as many brains as we can, right from the start. We'll cheerfully grab anything good that you send in - but we'll put YOUR name on it.

We're also working up some solitaire labyrinth scenarios. These will come out in Micro Format... you'll need MELEE and WIZARDS to play them. Each one will be a programmed adventure...several players can go through, but ONE person can also do it, by reading the instructions for each corridor and room. The first one (tentative title: FINAL EXAM) is now being tested.

And there's one other FANTASY TRIP project in the works, so wild, I'm not going to write about it yet. Look for it about the middle of next year. Of course, if things go well, you might be reading about it here next month. (Steve, that's blantant teasing!-HT) (Yep.-SJ).

At any rate, we're working hard on THE FANTASY TRIP - and enjoying it tremendously. The LABYRINTH section ought to be ready by late this fall. No promises, though. This has to be PERFECT before it goes to the printer. We think it'll set a new standard for fantasy games, and we want to live up to our own expectations.

Anyway, back to MELEE. It and the upcoming WIZARD are complementary parts of TFT's combat system. When we worked them out, we realized they made perfect stand-alone Micros. (Originally, we thought about putting both into one microgame, but we would have had to cut too much out to make them fit.) So when I talk about MELEE, I'm also, in a way, talking about WIZARD.



In MELEE, each fighter has two attributes: strength and dexterity. (WIZARD adds a third one - IQ.) Players don't roll for these. Instead, each character start out with 8 in each attribute, and the player gets another 8 to split between them as he likes. You can have an average fighter, a dextrous wealking, or a powerful clod. But you NEVER start with a superman or a total oaf; all beginning fighters are equivalent.

Having set up your ST and DX, you pick armor and weapons. The stronger you are, the bigger a weapon you can carry and the more damage you'll do if you hit. The more armor you wear, the better-protected you are, but the worse your DX gets. For more protection, you can abandon one of you weapons (everybody gets two) and carry a shield instead.

Movement takes place on a hex system. It seems so obvious, you wonder why it wasn't done years ago. But they missed it, and it works. The less armor you wear, the more you can move. Each fighter has a facing; anyone comeing into one of his 3 front hexes becomes " engage " and has to stop and, maybe fight. If you strike at an enemy's side or rear, your DX is effectively increase.

Disengaged figures can move freely and use missile weapons; engaged figures may only move one hex at a time (unless they get a chance to disengage and run); figures in hand-to-hand combat hang in there, cleaving each other to shreads.

Combat is handled by a two-roll system. Your first roll determines if you hit (WITHOUT a gigantic chart); the second determines damage.

Figures can be human, elf, dwarf hobbit, orc, goblin, or hobgoblin. You can also have a giant or a gargoyle (these are more than a match for two men). Animal counters are provided for wolves, bears, and snakes.

Beginning players should fight one-on-one until they get the feel of it, but the game is much more interesting with three or four fighters on a side. It moves more slowly when you have a real mob, but the tactical possibilities are endless. A forces B to retreat next to C. thus engaging him there, so A can disengage, throw his hammer at B, and unsling his crossbow to shoot D - except E is charging with a pole weapon...better hope he trips when he jumps over the late, lamented F.

We did most of the playtesting on this with miniature figures - I cannot describe how NEAT it is to actually see the battle being played out, especially when you have a good opponent and the figures are well-painted. Nevertheless, the counters supplied with the game are (thanks to Liz Danforth) very good. Each counter is 3/4" square (giants are bigger, of course), and shows a fighter and an identifying initial. But when you learn the rules, get yourself an enemy, a big hexsheet, and thirty figures, and play out a MOB scene, you will learn some interesting tactics.

The other thing about this one, of course, is that it doesn't have to be a two-player game. We did some three-cornered playtesting, which worked; and in THE FANTAST TRIP tests, each of a half-dozen players manipulated two or three characters on a big map. Or, going the other way, you can play it solitaire, trying out different weapon, armor, and tactical combinations.

I'm really please with MELEE. There's a lot more I'd have liked to get in; some of that will be in The Space Gamer, of course. But on the whole, it's a good game. I'm pleased to have finally got it out of my hair, so I can work on other things.

Upcoming stuff includes:

WIZARD, which you already know about. Standing alone, it'll be a MicroGame wherein wizards slug it out with spells, curses, and created beings. Or it can be combined with MELEE, so that groups of fighters can take a wizard or so along as heavy artillery. That should be MicroGame 6.

MicroGame Number 5 will be RIVETS, Robert Taylor's robot game. It's set in a future where all the pesky humans are gone, leaving the robots to fight, multiply, and generally cause trouble. Not only a good game, but a very funny one, with some artwork that should have Vaughn Bode turning in his grave.

And Number 4 (I don't know how I got into this stuff backwards) is Howard's WarpWar, which has been getting a lot of playtesting lately. Only real problem left is balancing the CRT. Since it's diceless - an outguessing game, where each player picks an option for each ship and you compare options to find out what happened - it has to be EXCELLENTLY balanced to work at all. No point in putting in an option that won't be used. But that's being ironed out. Considering the timelag between now and publication of TSG 12, it may be that WarpWar can be considered available. (Ready Sept. 1, 1977,-HT)

That's all we've got sequenced right now. Several other Micros are in progress, but publication order will depend on what gets ready first. Among the Micros to look for in 1978:

A ground-combat game, set on and underneath the surface of Mars. Lynn Willis (you'd better recognize that name - he did GODSFIRE) is working on this one. It could be #7 with no problem at all; the only bugs left in the last version were rule-clarification details and the fact that it took three hours to play. An excellent game, with some good gimmicks; about as complex as CHITIN.

An orbital-satellite game. This is K. Allen Bjorke's design. A little rough, as of this writing, but it has promise.

THE BATTLE FOR CLEVELAND. Yes.. Cleveland. Many years in the future. Forrest Johnson had this game 100% playable and 80% publishable several months ago. I guess when he's satisfied with it, he'll send it back. I liked it. It's a small-unit-tactical game, set in a future history he's developing, and features some really weird beings and gadgets, all of whom want Cleveland.

Another OGRE game. I've got an OGRE article elsewhere in this issue, so I'll just refer to that and shut up.

Another CHITIN game. This is Howard's project. (Yes, he's still working on HYMENOPTERA.) CHITIN II will get in some more advanced units. (And working, and working.-HT).

EREWHON. This one is mine. A fantasy game, but emphasizing interaction, and bravado rather than tactical skill. It's still lacking something...if we ever figure out what it is, we'll print it. It's fun.

The Micros are the main project right now, with THE FANTASY TRIP running a close second. As of now, those are the things to watch for. Computer games will happen when they happen, and HYMENOPTERA will be out someday.

People have been asking about selling MicroGame designs to Metagaming; we've even been sent a few. On the Micros, we ARE interested in buying outside designs. The catch: it has to be finished work. If you send us something, it should be so complete that we can sit down with it as though it were a new game bought at the store, open it up, and play it. If we get one like that, we'll evaluate it; if we like it, we'll start detailed playtesting immediately. If we don't like it, we'll write and tell you why.

If you send us a sheaf of unplaytested notes, we'll send them back. Sorry about that.

The best way to check your work for completeness is to give it to a couple of your friends who have never seen it before, and GO AWAY. If they can play it when you're not around to explain, you've go something that (at least) we'll be happy to look at.

Have fun - SJ.

FEATURES

GAME INTENT

by Lynn Willis

Every fantasy and science fiction simulation I know is worth playing--if not as a steady date, at least as an acquaintance. A handful are memorable apart from specific games and opponents. This intrinsic appeal or interest should not be confused with brilliance, aptness, or ease of game system mechanics, though mechanics are a game's bones. It seems to me that F&SF games, uniquely, are honored to the extent that they bring to life the universe they depict, and that this is not totally related to the success of the game as a game. Aliveness is chiefly a matter of game intent.

Consider Sorcerer and White Bear and Red Moon (1st ed). Sorcerer finely renders an unusual combat system and stops at that, apparently because its premise became a joke as the game evolved. Why include irony and cynicism in the scenario rationales unless you want to discourage belief in the "reality" of the game? A satirical game would not make game mechanics and tactics so serious and iron clad. The approach is instructively different from the steadiness and commitment evident in StarForce, Sorcerer's formulaic predecessor. Commentary and rationales indicate that StarForce was felt to be realistic--evocative--important, all that Sorcerer is not. WB&RM, on the other hand, became a way of life for its designer, and while there are jokes, they are not such as to make the game itself inconsequential.

After presenting a combat system and scenarios, Sorcerer concludes. The charm of WB&RM lays in its still-expanding cloud of special units, expressing by a participatory fecundity the essence of magic. In comparison, Sorcerer, with its barren air dragons, demonic infantry and trolls, neither gets its shoes off, not its pants on. I agree that Sorcerer is the better game. WB&RM is the better experience.

Like Sorcerer, StarForce features an elaborate and unusual combat and movement system, and a lengthy series of scenarios sketch fictive histories in both games. StarForce's two-page rationale (Sorcerer had a half-page introduction) describes the increasingly compassionate growth of many races. Sorcerer's scenarios stack meaningless names and dates. It underwrites no moral system; no moral problem unifies it. No good or evil exists, and the fueds are characterless. Star Force's map is a service in itself, because it portrays nearby stellar relationships in an easily comprehended format, information not otherwise quickly available. Sorcerer's map has no meaning beyond the game.

In terms of scale and system, StarForce and WB&RM are as unalike as can be, but they respect themselves, and the people who buy them. Sorcerer's combat system is better than either, but (like Outreach) it is not so much incomplete as it is under-complete. There is so much more in the game universe than occurs in the game that nitpickers like myself feel obscurely cheated. (See Imperium-1 for some very interesting comments on Outreach as well as the above.)

Starship Troopers, Rift Trooper, StarSoldier, Starguard, and Ogre are ground tactical games set in the future. All dealing with armored infantry, they owe a debt of perentage to Heinlien's novel, Starship Troopers (1959), one of a handful of SF novels to take war as a subject (as opposed to the effects of war). Heinlein can be a stimulating writer of social philosophy. It is regretable that, once in the Campbell mold, he rarely escaped its obligatory obesiances to the meanest, onriest critters in the universe, etc. There is also some Spencerian nonsense about races expanding or dying (a vicious corruption of Darwinist selective and radiation adaption), but in the main we get a close sketch of MI (Mobile Infantry) training and small unit tactics. (See Phil Kosnett's fine article in Moves-32 for more information; better, read Heinlein's book.)

Starship Troopers and Rift Trooper portray incidents from the

novel. ST in every conceptual, developmental, or physical way, is superior. I do admire the RT "skid" rule which has the MI's ploughing furrows for hundreds of meters when they change direction (like Wily Coyote). ST reproduces the book so exactly that game feels curiously old-fashioned and safe. Weaponry has advanced since Heinlein wrote the novel, and in re-reading it I wondered how well the MI would fare on today's battlefield--advances in PGM's would certainly doom them by A.D. 2000. For my taste, the game is also handicapped by amateurish artwork and a smeary map apparently mastered from congealed antipasto. The game plays immaculately, however, and the programmed rules reflect the care of its design. The last pages of the rules are montages of printed "evidence" mostly drawn from situations in the novel. Like the artwork, this good idea is not well-executed, but as a whole Starship Troopers wants to evoke its game universe, and the rules never lapse in tone. It is not as conceptually beautiful as StarForce, and not as sophisticated, but it wants to be. That is respectable.

StarSoldier descends immediately from StarForce. Like Starship Troopers, I suspect that SS's potential was blunted by the need to conform to a game-world already in print. Steve List's article, also in Moves-32, provides ESP rules and suggests some of the impossibilities mandated by the linked rationale with StarForce. The game combines Sniper's si-move with StarForce's split-phase task allocation system, so counter density remains very low, and interest accumulates on individual counters in a way not true of Starship Troopers. Both sides are mobile, also not true of the Avalon-Hill game, though SS's low TPA's sometimes make for oddly static situations in a game-world of nearly omnipotent movement and fire capacity. Weaponry is suprisingly analogous to today's: support platforms (tanks), energy beams (rifles), launched weapons guided (PGM's) and unguided (LAW's), opacity grenades (smoke), orbital bombardment (off-map artillery). Homing missiles do add a new feeling. In concept, jargon, and play-process, StarSoldier is much more "science fictional" than Starship Trooper. They are quite similar in gross elements of play, however, and since the weaponry is the thing in a tactical game, both games could be profitably up-gunned by weaponry new in what it does, not in what it is called. Lacking that decisive advantage, most players opt for the game easier to play--Starship Troopers. It is entirely reasonable that TSG rates Troopers .6 higher than StarSoldier.

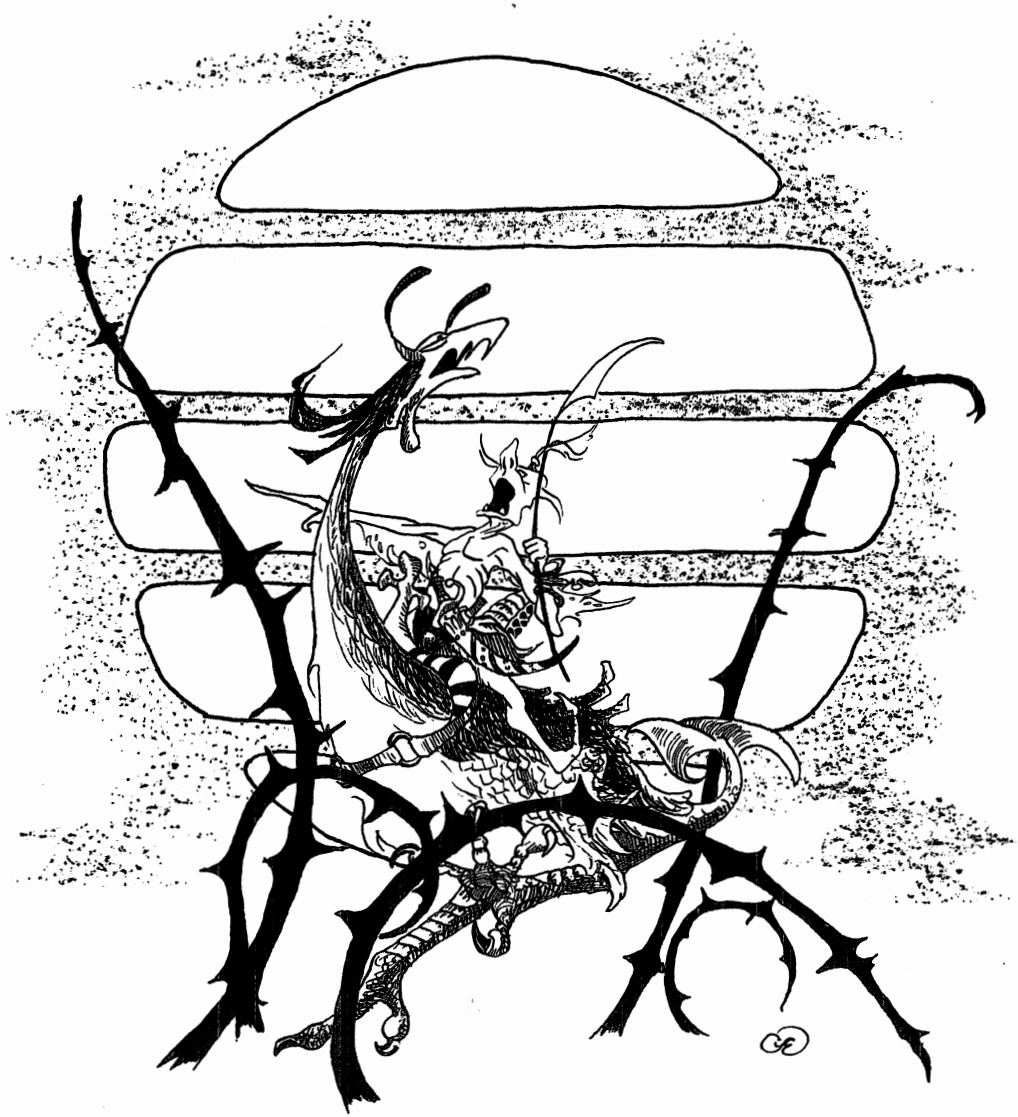
Starguard will provide some interesting weapons for either of the games above--those for conversion beams and tridex explosives are suggestive--and any player would do well to examine this miniatures game rulebook, for it is a locker of good ideas. As soon as you encounter Starguard's variety of descriptions and capacities, it becomes apparent that part of the problem with StarSoldier is that the units are simply so strong and that nothing can affect them except enemy units. This is chess-like, highly abstract, and prevents that interaction with the sublties of map and rules which reinforce the illusion of reality in the mind of the player.

Conceptually, Ogre is the most successful tactical SF game. Its tiny design is bent completely to the task of evoking the terror provoked by nearly unstoppable cybernetic tanks--ogres, as they are called. Using a simplified CA system the long, narrow map funnels the impassive Ogre toward your deservedly panicky HQ, and that bit of cardboard takes on the power of the hand of doom. I find the multi-Ogre battles less convincing, because more units dilute the Ogre's nightmarish singularity.

Ogre is quite limited in what it tries to do, and this may be a hint to Troopers and StarSoldier that the time spent developing all those scenarios might be better spent in creating more depth in one or two version of a game-world. On the other hand, after a number of games of Ogre players will legitimately ask where the heavy nuclear bombs are kept, and where their delivery systems are, and why there are no provisions for blinding Ogres with magnetic dust, spray paint, etc. etc. The disadvantage of small game systems is that you ram your head against a wall once in a while; the nice thing about Ogre is that you don't care.

Consequently, although basic furniture must remain the same, much remains to be accomplished in the ground tactical game, both a la Heinlein and in general (i.e., single combat with greatly expanded monitoring, fox and hounds situations, alien life forms and motives (Chitin I starts on hexagonal fields, alien environments a la Hal Clement, and you will be able to add more). A simulation game by definition is the interaction of a game system with a game environment; in F&SF gaming we have the rare opportunity to explore both sides of that definition. If I see any basic problem with the tactical games discussed, it is that they stop within the bounds of safety--let's have some that are wild.

In large measure the quality of game intent stems from the designer's resolve to use the freedom available; I do not see any way to create F&SF games which are both safe and worthy of remembering.



PLAYING WITH FIRE

by Edward C. Cooper

The summoning of Godsfire would be an event of unprecendented catastrophic consequences. Imagine it: a million-billion, living, breathing, human beings - an entire heart of civilization - fleets, machines, industries, swept away with the instantaneous flick of a switch...

... the all encompassing, blinding brilliance of GODSFIRE expanding outward, erasing years, decades, centuries worth of knowledge in a few brief moments of thermostellar annihilation. The path back up the face of time will be long and uncertain.

The calculated, wholesale destruction of life in the NARYM cluster by the deliberate triggering of Godsfire may then seem even more inconceivable. On the surface, there appears nothing to gain through such a wanton act of racial homicide. Yet underneath, the threat is real; constant and lurking.

The Cluster Buster Rule presents an interesting paradox for military consideration: *Winning too handily can be just as deadly as losing.* The rule, being optional, can be thrown out of the campaign scenario, and play would indeed be very different-and very dull. The illusion of life and all its intricacies would not be present.

The vanquished NG, beaten back to one system, is still a formidable foe. The ultimate weapon of Godsfire is technical knowledge to all. Within the present framework of the period, this is reality. By the same reality, an ill-fated NG will not hesitate to use the only means of possible survival, taking as much of the opponent along with it as possible.

What is there for the dying to lose? Nothing-but this is no revelation. Suprisingly, there is all to gain if planned correctly.

The monosystem government has learned the manipulation of the fire and is about to re-emerge. Rebirth through death... Godsfire!

... a suicide squadron moves outward into the depths of deep space; the ultimate weapon of a doomed government. Ten ships of the line transit and form, combined, the strength of nineteen. Waiting...

... Planetside, preparations for the holocaust are well underway. AGs sift back from the frontal action to land and disperse in maximum strength to insure some will survive. Above, the enemy ships do not seem like such bright lights to the people below. PDFs dig in. They too, are waiting...

... On the other edge of the cluster, a self-proclaimed victor wallows in celebration, openly parading his vast fleet, unaware of the disaster about to befall them...

Through the triggering of Godsfire, a monosystem NG can turn disadvantages into advantages. Logically, the monosystem does not have as many systems to administer. Just as good strategic manipulation through *the social interphase* can increase wealth and power; the social interphase can also be used to create rapid social deterioration and discord in times of war.

Production and Equal Purchasing can become an overwhelming handicap to the multisystem government whose saved Gross National Product is cut in half with two regions of every allied planet devestated. Surviving regions of the multi-system or COMBINE government can also be expected to be of a higher economic level than those of the monosystem. Prosperity comes with the accumulation of power. Thus, gaps between industry and agricultural balances, when found, will be wider. A drop in economic levels of surviving regions will be greater for the Combine in these cases.

The monosystem will not escape its own creation; levels will drop here too. But the point remains; the Combine must administer and balance an array of planets. By natural selection, the situation on some is going to be worse than others. Under normal conditions, resources and capital can be readily transferred to a devestated region on a more troubled planet. With the occurance of Godsfire, planetary parties may not as readily recognize the needs of the NG, attempting instead to hoard supplies for themselves. Tottering allegience levels, and loan problems associated with cash deficiencies and present loan defaults may handcuff the NGs efforts to affect a cure through forced taxation or loans.

The capital and resources necessary to stabilize a stellar community can closely resemble a geometric progression: one system to one, two systems to four, three systems to eight. Note, as the system number increases arithmetically, capital outlay required doubles. This directly relates to several areas: counter subversion costs, raising economic level costs, (among them) and to production and equal purchasing inefficiencies - such as having to "throw away" money to equalize spending on a planet during production to keep allegience levels high. The NG can ill-afford revolts breaking out in the first few turns after the epochal disaster of Godsfire.

The biggest handicap the Combine government faces is "overextension and undervelopment." Production is now too small to maintain present area size. Cash reserves are not adequate to meet rising social needs.

The monosystem has less size to spend on, less budget to balance. Though weak, its production is adequate to maintain its small size. Forces are concentrated on one sphere augmenting what combat strength is left. Greater security is possible. It presents no outward threat to the other surviving national governments in the Narym.

And what of raising economic levels after the trauma of Godsfire has passed? Economic stimulation will be necessary on the road to reconstruction. Only moderate controlled regions may have their economic level raised.

The glaring factor now in favor of the monosystem becomes apparent: the monosystem player will have manipulated party alignment during social interphase to be predominately moderates. Moderates produce AGs and AGs will be the main weapon system in fighting a primarily ground-based defensive war. The AG gives strong defense and some punch offensively to exploit any weakness found, and thus prolongs survival.

A majority of extremist parties will be found within the Combine as people rise to the war spirit; the smell of victory. Power within the Combine will center around the SQD as the war is carried to the defender. There will also be a need to protect the widely spread allied systems from other neutrals who may decide on hostile intervention.

As a result of these trends, quicker economic buildup is possible for the monosystem-should Godsfire appear. The Combine will run the risk of revolt when trying to change parties and this will only add to the widespread social problems already present.

If the monosystem dares the risk, it can exercise its greater flexibility in changing production emphasis through party realignment. The moderate party can go either extremist or reactionary. Extremist can only go to reactionary after it has become moderate. There is no direct route. The Combine takes more chances of revolution and more reaction time to achieve change.

True, the Combine, having more planetary regions, will probably have a proportion of moderate

governments equal to the monosystem. Once again however, on a per capita basis, the amount of AGs produced by the Combine relative to that produced by the monosystem, will not be enough to fulfill the NEED felt within the reaches of the Combine. And supply on demand is essential in GODSFIRE.

A shift in production emphasis will be further delayed by the Combine NG as maximum production will again be placed on the SQD - only this time to replace losses and protect a now vulnerable empire. (Neutral NGs may find this period of chaos an excellent opportunity to reinstitute expansions of their own.) Unlike the isolated monosystem, the Combine will have to carry on heavy commerce (and quickly) between planets after Godsfire, in order to re-establish stability. AGs will not provide the secure protection for such a shift of cash and resources.

Diplomacy should not be passed up either. There will be much of it both before and after the appearance of Godsfire. It would be very distressing to a neutral NG if the threat to evoke Godsfire occured while it was in the depths of space. Even with "grounded" NGs, everything they have built up is at stake-and they are not even involved. The threat forces them to become involved. (This makes the galactic situation very tense and dangerous, especially when among the neutral NGs there are those whose "neutrality" may be a cloak of disguise for their own schemes.)

Somehow, it is naturally assumed the perpetrator of Godsfire will be the one to lose esteem with the neutral governments. This is a common illusion. There is nothing the neutral govenrment can do to prevent the monosystem from a conscious triggering of Godsfire. Sympathy, if fact, is probably on the side of the monosystem, as the other NGs in the Narym are probably small in size also. Only the monosystem chose to fight-maybe because it controlled two systems instead of one at the outset of hostilities.

Yet, because it does not want to see Godsfire appear, there are many steps which can be taken against the Combine to force it into a more reasonable position concerning the existing boundries or disagreements, subversion attempts, alliances by the neutrals, active support of the monosystem, even threats of retaliation <u>after</u> Godsfire errupts. There are many degrees of persuasive diplomacy that can be employed.

The basic point is, without proper restraint by the Combine, *the major strength of the Combine can be used as its functional weakness as relates to the appearance of Godsfire.*

In a society where each government holds the key to total destruction of all, violent force may not be, in the strict sense of the words, a proper response or solution to solving problems(winning). Change must come gradually in a complex society such as the Narym, in order for the many factions leading civilization to adjust accordingly. Rapid change can lead to disaster: there is no time for the "decision structure" of the Narym to work.

Military force may be a partial solution to problems, used correctly, but when one side starts losing too much, to a point where they FEEL they have nothing else to lose, military force can blossom in Godsfire!

The victor of GODSFIRE will have to overcome the alienation of the smaller governments. Active diplomacy and a delegation of power in the decision making process is a revolutionary but effective answer. This gives time for decision making processes to work efficiently. Military force-violent, military force-should be used only in the extreme. Don't make a diplomatic policy out of it! The "winning" player must take steps to "tone down" his strength-not using it often might not be such a bad idea! Overplaying superiority by using a hammer to crack a vase will only nail shut a player's own casket.

To be successful, a player must insure the smaller NGs always have <u>more to lose through the appearance of Godsfire,</u> than they do to gain. The difficulty is real and threatening. A solution is still in the balance.

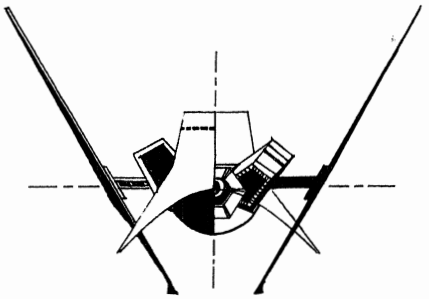
Society CAN endure, and might (or might not) learn-*HOW to play with fire.*

GODSFIRE

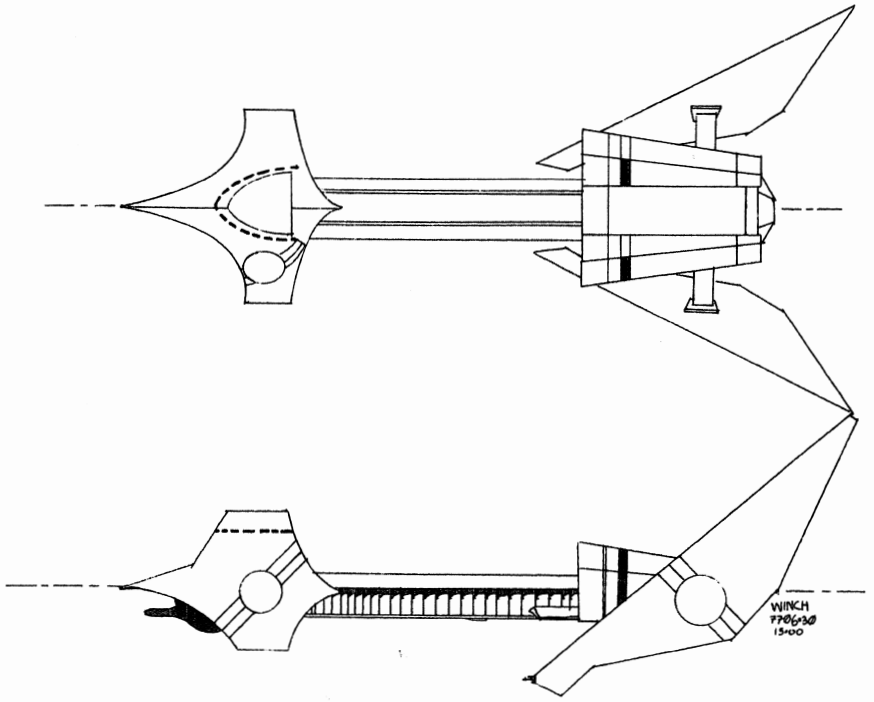
DEEP SPACE SQUADRON UNIT

by

WINCHELL CHUNG



Length	145m
Crew	300
Mass	94,000mt
Armament	1025cm Graeser
Primary Drive	PseudoBussard
Secondary Drive	Fusion Torch



STAR TYPES IN *STARFORCE*

by Norman S. Howe

In TSG #11, Robert C. Kirk wrote an article allowing gamers to play STELLAR CONQUEST using the STARFORCE 3-D map. He recommended assigning star classes at players' discretion, maintaining the same balance of star classes as in SC, for the ease of using the star cards. As STARFORCE uses real star systems, arbitrary spectral classification is somewhat unrealistic. The true classes are discoverable; and this article is an attempt to depict the actual state of affairs in Sol's immediate neighborhood.

First, SC occurs in a very unique star cluster. It is young, and contains a high proportion of the class G stars similar to our own. There are no multiple stars. There are no white dwarfs, which result from stellar collapse at old age. The cluster is an ideal one in which to search for habitable worlds.

In contrast, the local stars are much older. Several stars have reached the White Dwarf stage; the intermediate supergiant phase would probably obliterate any habitable planets of such stars, and lower the value of planets of companion stars in multiple systems. As well, under present technology, the chances of finding habitable planets are probably lower than is suggested in SC. Stephen H. Dole and Isaac Asimov have published an excellent book on this subject.[1]

If we assume that technology permits us to use more marginal environments (technology developed from pollution control, perhaps?), the situation more closely resembles SC. Finally, the percent stellar composition by spectral class is different from SC. Class G stars are less than half as common; class M stars occur twice as frequently, and there is a dearth of B and F class stars (there are 2 "A" stars and 1 "F" star; some of the White Dwarfs are secondarily A and F, but their dwarfish states render them dubious choices for habitation.)

A partial list of useful stellar data has been assembled in tabular form. Each entry lists the star name as it appears on the STAR FORCE map, and the spectral classification of the star(s) in the system. The grid co-ordinates are also given for some of the stars, where similar numbers may cause confusion, and for the 4 new star systems within 17 light-years of Sol which have been discovered since the publication of SF.

The letter-number designations are the spectral classes of the stars, A (or B), F, G, K, and M from brightest to dimmest. Within each spectral class, O is the brightest/large star type, and 9 the dimmest/small. "wd" indicates a White Dwarf star. Several class listings separate by slashes indicate multiple star systems. A "c" indicates that the star has an unseen companion (either a very dim star or a super-Jovian planet). "?" indicates either that information was not available for a star system, or that astronomers haven't confirmed the spectral class of a particular star.

My RASC Handbook[2] allegedly lists <u>all</u> stars within 17 ly. of Sol, but I can find no listings which remotely correspond to CD-21 (3325/-5) or Innes' Star (1520/-8), at 9 and 14 ly. on the SF display. As well, some of the names on the SF display disagree with my <u>Handbook</u> listings, although the positions correspond. The differences are as follows: (StarForce name/Handbook name):

BD 59 (2126/10)/Sigma 2398
CD-36 (2922/-7)/Lacaille 9352
Luyten's Star (1608/1)/BD 5 1668
DC-39 (2727/-8)/Lacaille 8760
BD 50 (1216/11)/Groombridge 1618
BD 68 (1926/14)/A Oe 17415-6
Lalande 21258/BD 44 2051
EV Lacertae/BD 43 4305

<u>Table of Stellar Information</u>

Alpha Centauri G2/K5/M5
Beta Hydri G1
CD-20 (0732/-7) ?
61 Cyngi K5/K7c
Delta Pavonis G7
82 Eridani G5
Eta Cassiopeiae G0/K6
HR7703 K2/M5
HR8832 K3
36 Ophiuchi K2/K1/K6
70 Ohpiuchi K1/K6
Rho (p)Eridani ?
Sigma Draconis G9
Sol G2
Tau Ceti G8
Procyon F5/wd
Innes' Star ?
Sirius A1/wd
Barnard's Star M5c
Kapteyn's Star M0
Krueger 60 M4/M6
40 Eridani K0/wdA/M4
Altair A7
Groombridge 34 M1/M6
EV Lacertae M5c
van Maanen's Star wdF
AC 79(1521/16) M4
BD 20 (0715/5) M4.5c
BD 45 (0913/16) ?
Epsilon Eredani K2
Epsilon Indi K5
BD 53 (1112/16) ?
BD 50 (1216/11) M0
BD-12 (1532/-3) M5
BD 45 (1734/14) ?
BD 68 (1926/14) M3.5c
BD 59 (2126/10) M3.5/M4
BD 4 (2537/2) ?
CC 658(1420/-13) wd
CD-40 (1132/-13) ?
CD-26 (1637/-8) ?
CD-44 (1731/-11) M5
CD-46 (1830/-11) M4
CD-21 (1938/-7) ?
CD-21 (2002/-7) ?
CD-39 (2727/-8) M1
CD-49 (2826/-12) M3
CD-45 (2832/-14) ?
CD-36 (2922/-7) M2
CD-21 (3325/-5) ?
CD-37 (3220/-8) M3
UC 48 (1331/-16) ?
Lalande 25372 M3.5
Lalande 21258 M2
Lalande 21185 M2c
Lalande 46650 ?
Luyten's Star M4c
Luyten 647-15 ?
Luyten 68-28 ?
Luyten 97-12 ?
Luyten 347-14 ?
Luyten 726-8 M6/M6
Luyten 789-6 M6
Ross 128 M5
Ross 986 ?
Ross 614 M5/?
Ross 47 ?
Ross 154 M5
Ross 248 M6
Ross 780 M5
Wolf 424 M6/M6
Wolf 562 ?
Wolf 359 M6
Wolf 294 ?

<u>Newly Discovered Stars</u>

G158-27 (3420/-2) ?
L725-23 (3216/-4) M5
Luyten 1159-16 (3513/3) M7
Stein 2051 (2313/15) M5/wd

Contrary to Mr. Kirk's article, the stars on the SF display are already differentiated by habitability class. Note that the primary systems and secondary systems indentified in the list all contain G and K class stars, the likeliest candidates for habitable worlds. The only listed tertiary system containing a class K star is 40 Eridani (Vulcan's sun), which also contains a white dwarf, lowering the system's desireability somewhat.

Information is available (somewhere!) to complete the list of stars. In the meantime, the "?" stars can be rolled for using two dice and the following table:

Die Roll	Meaning
2	"F" spectral class star
3	"wd" white dwarf (Class B card plus special rules
4	"c" (next star rolled has an unseen companion
5 or 6	Multiple star: roll 2 stars for this system
7 or 8	"M" spectral class star
9	"K" spectral class star
10	"G" spectral class star
11	Triple star: roll 3 stars for this system
12	"B" spectral class star

Probably the best K and G class systems should be assigned to CD-20 (0732/-7) and p Eridani before any others.

In order to use the "wd" and "c" data, the following rules are needed: <u>White Dwarf</u> stars are the remnants of stellar disasters: they have detrimental effects on habitable planets. Treat "wd" and "wdA" stars as class B, and the "wdF" as an F, but lower all habitability classes by one level, and halve the population limits. (i.e. an ST-40 becomes an MT-20, etc.) BR remains BR, and NM status is unaffected. In multiple star systems containing white dwarfs, population limits of companion stars are halved, but habitability class is unaffected.

<u>Dark Companions</u> are gas supergiants which may cause tidal effects on nearby planets. As such, giants occur further from a sun than the zone in which TR and ST planets are likely to occur; their influence can be simulated by halving the population limit of the outermost TR or ST planes in such a system. MT and BR planets suffer no effects.

Except for the White Dwarf rule, multiple star systems are sufficiently independent that they do not influence each others' habitable worlds. Draw one star card for each

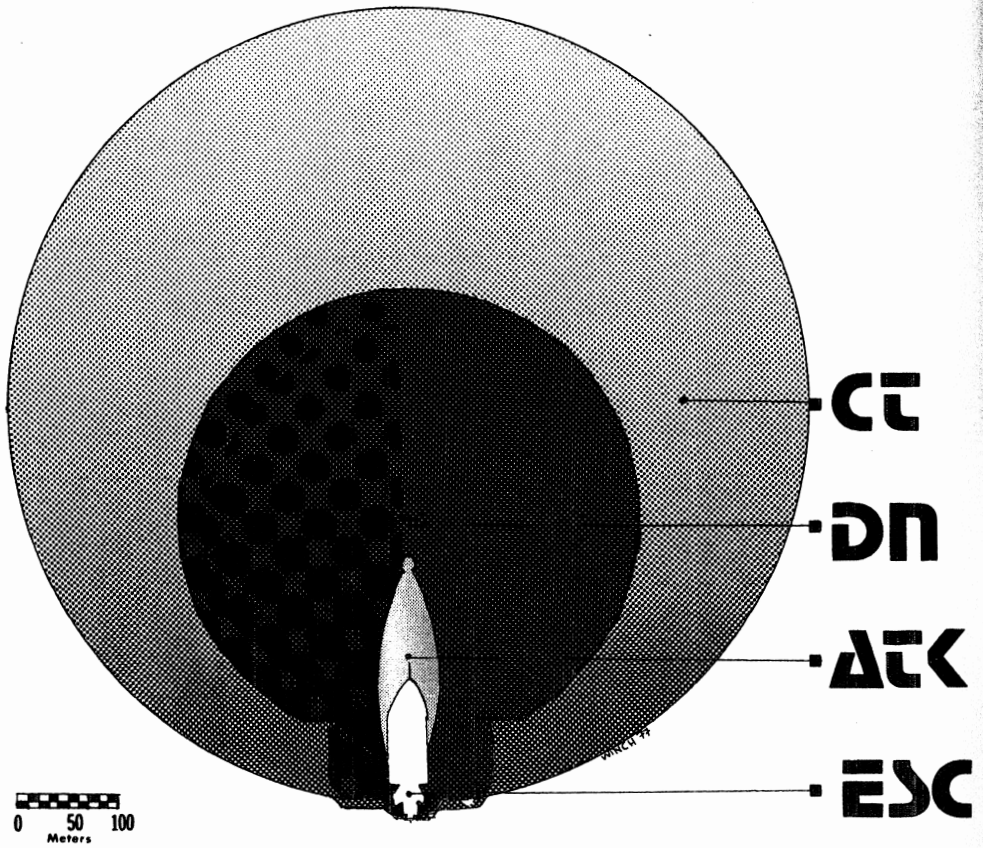
star in a multiple system. Because there are many more stars on the StarForce display system than there are star cards of the appropriate types, players should not keep their star cards, but should replace them in a discard pile. When the original cards are exhausted, the discards should be reshuffled.

Using this system, a fairly interesting game can be played. As habitable systems are less favorable, the game will last longer than a standard SC game, and will be fought much harder.

Sources:

1 Planets for Man, by Stephen H. Dole and Isaac Asimov, Random House, New York, 1964. Popularization of a RAND corporation report.

2 The Observer's Handbook, Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, 1977. Published and updated annually.



the last about ship effectiveness in *stellar conquest*

by Dennis Rebertus

Tom McDermott's article, Ship Effectiveness in Stellar Conquest, in TSG#5 provided readers with a means of judging the relative strengths of both players in certain STELLAR CONQUEST battles. In the process, he introduced the reader to some very practical mathematical techniques for computing probabilities.

With some extensions of McDermott's techniques I have computed the probability of victory for all combat situations in which 5 or less ships of one type attack a force of 5 or less ships of another type, i.e., I have found the probability of victory in such situations as 5 ESC vs. 3 ATK or 4 ATK vs. 2 DN, but not for "mixed" situations such as 1 ESC and 2 ATK vs. 2 ATK. It was assumed that both sides wished to fight to the bitter end (neither force was allowed to withdraw) and all combinations of having or not having ISW (Improved Ship Weapons) were considered. Victory was judged on the basis of which player had at least one surviving ship after annihilation of the other player's force rather than on the basis of ship IU costs. Of course one may question whether the player with 5 DN who attacks a player having only 1 ATK and loses 4 DN before destroying the ATK has really obtained a victory; but when a major colony is involved, the survivor of a battle reaps enormous benefits regardless of the relative IU point losses in ships.

The values clearly indicate the ATK is the least effective ship in terms of fire power per unit cost. The ability of an ATK force to attack a DN force is much less than the ability of an ESC force to attack and ATK force---and this in spite of the fact that an ATK costs ½ as much as a DN while an ESC costs only 2/5 as much as an ATK. And conversely, the ability of an ATK force to attack an ESC force is much less than the ability of a DN force to attack an ATK force although a DN costs 2.0 times as much as an ATK, while an ATK costs 2.5 times as much as and ESC.

I, for one, have relegated the ATK to a very minor role in my game. I prefer to pay the higher research cost of 90IU for the DN before developing the ATK, thus postponing the entry (if any) of the ATK until late in the game where I often use colonies of less than 40 million and more than 20 million to build ATKs. At that stage of the game, it seems pointless to build any more ESCs since hostile DNs are so numerous.

Is the relative ineffectiveness of the ATK really fair? I don't think so. In his article, McDermott made some suggestions with regard to this. Among these was a proposal to make the ESC less effective by changing the roll needed for an ESC to destroy an ATK from 10 to 11. I do not favor this suggestion as it still leaves the DN very superior to the ATK. I think McDermott's other suggestion, that of increasing the fire power of the ATK, is more desirable. Perhaps the ATK should be allowed to destroy a DN with a roll of 10 or 12, and to destroy an ESC with a roll of 8 or more. With these changes, I think a more reasonable balance of ship fire power with ship cost would be attained.

DESIGNER'S NOTE:

The value of the Attack based on destructive power and cost is an elusive concept. Strong cases can be made for the cost effectiveness of ESCs and DNs.

As STELLAR CONQUEST'S designer, it may interest readers to know my favority ship is the maligned ATTACK. It's my workhorse because of play style and strategy, not cost effectiveness. The preffered strategy is to have many ATKs with high movement allowance. It's a matter of getting there "firstest with the mostest" in my book. Rather than sit back and build a 200-300 IU output industrial base the fast ATKs allow conquests with smaller colonies far earlier. Many times a fleet of 10-20 ATKs catches a defense with only a handful of ESCs and new DNs. A loss of 50% of the more easily replaced ATKs is acceptable to wipe out the defender's embryonic Dreadnaught fleet.

It is a matter of style and preferrence. A relatively large number of SMA or GMA Attacks striking early suits me. But, it should be noted I'm only a strong B+ player, not the best.

Howard Thompson

IRON MOUNTAIN

an **OGRE** *scenario*

by J. Richard Jarvinen

graphics by sigoonda

"Well, sir, what do you think?"

Captain Emory R. Hanson, USA, slowly lowered his field glasses from the small plume of dust rapidly approaching his transport column.

"Yeah, lieutenant, it looks like one of ours. Probably Jacobs, judging from the direction."

"But he's not supposed to report for another half-hour. And besides, wouldn't he call if there were trouble?"

"Yes, he would. If he could." Captain Hanson had reason to worry. He was solely responsible for delivering ten truckloads of sodium nitrate to launch site B, high on Iron Mountain. Four armored vehicles, three GEV's and five platoons of infantry should be adequate protection, but...

"Lieutenant!", snapped Captain Hanson, "I want you to inform all drivers that they are to proceed at maximum possible speed. Now!"

The lieutenant hesitated, as if to say something, but apparently thought better of his impulse. "Yes, sir," he said, and ran quickly down the caravan to issue the order. Hanson raised his glasses again and peered over the windscreen of his jeep, studying the unexpected, an unidentified vehicle. The roar of the giant diesels starting up reverberated through the air as the 4½ ton trucks began their arduous climb up the mountain road.

Five minutes later, Hanson was still standing in his jeep when an American GEV drew up close and shut down its power, falling to earth with the cry of tearing metal, rather than settling slowly as air-cushioned vehicles normally stop. The door literally flew open and Corporal Jeffrey R. Jacobs stumbled out, his left arm hanging bloody and useless at his side.

"Sir," he panted, "an OGRE! It almost got us! Blew our radio out on the first shot. It was all we could do to get away. Simpson's dead, Meyer's hurt, but not badly-"

"Easy, son," the captain interrupted. "Just tell me what I want to know. How far back is it and what direction is it headed?"

The corporal paused to catch his breath. When he did speak, it was in gasps and he kept wiping his brow with his good arm. "We spotted it about forty kliks back, just before it saw us. We exchanged a couple of quick shots and then we took off. It must still be following us, but our radar went out along with our radio." Jacobs eyed the remains of the antenna that used to fly proudly along the top of his vehicle. He turned back, half smiling, "I think we got a hit on its treads."

"Good work, corporal, Did you recognize the model?"

"No sir, not exactly, but from the size, it must have been a Mark III. It was kinda hard to judge at our distance and we ran pretty fast."

"All right, corporal, you're dismissed. Catch up with the van, the last wagon should have some medical equipment to take care of that arm."

"Yes sir," said Jacobs and went running back into his GEV, which started almost immediately. Lifting clumsily from the ground, it slowly accelerated up the road in pursuit of the convoy.

Hanson sat down, wiping his hand over his mouth, a habit most people recognized in him as a sign of extreme anxiety. His driver, Sergeant Wiles, looked at him rather speculatively.

"Well, do you think we can outrun it?"

Hanson paused before responding. "I don't know. I hope to hell we can. Catch up with the trucks. I've got some figuring to do." As the jeep started off, Hanson reached into a compartment and grabbed a map and pocket calculator. He began to figure.

When they reached the rear of the convoy, Lieutenant Bourcher was waiting in his own jeep.

"Did you find out what it was?"

Hanson frowned at his question. "It's an OGRE, lieutenant, and it's coming straight at us." The lieutenant paled, while Hanson continued. "Here's what I want you to do. Up ahead there's a large turnout. I want all the lead tanks and GEV's to pull over and let the main convoy pass. Then they are to pull in after the last truck and be ready for action from the rear. And Lieutenant, I want this information radioed. Now!" The lieutenant jumped up, barked a "yessir," and ran off.

"O.K., sergeant, let's go. I want to be at the front of this convoy ASAP." Sergeant Wiles put the jeep into gear, jammed down on the pedal and they raced off, gravel and rubber scattering behind them. Captain Hanson looked at his watch and then went back to work on his calculator.

The lieutenant had now joined Captain Hanson in his jeep as it raced along in front of the convoy. Anxiously he looked up.

"Do you think we can outrun it?" he asked.

"No, lieutenant, I do not."

The lieutenant bit his lip. "Then, I guess we'll..." his voice cracked slightly as he spoke, "we'll have to fight it."

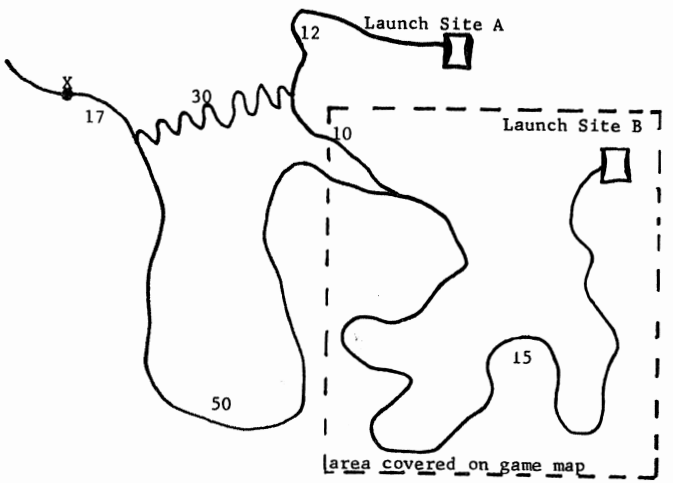
"Yes, we will. But I'll tell you what we're going to do, just in case we suddenly have a new commander." Hanson looked hard at the lieutenant, who returned his gaze with, determination, if not with confidence, fully aware of who was second in command. "Now here's a little map of the roads leading up Iron Mountain." Hanson sketched briefly on a small pad.

"The numbers are the distances in kilometers from one intersection to the next. We're at point X and are trying to reach B, the secondary launch site. The small, curvy line is the old Post road, unused for several years. Going up, you'll see we have two possible destinations. Regardless of our destination, the OGRE, with his superior speed, will be able to catch up. Our only advantage, and I emphasize only, is the OGRE doesn't know to which site we're headed. It turns out that if we're going to A, we should take the old road, and if we're going to B, we should take the new one. At least, that's what we should do if we want to prevent the OGRE from getting in front of us, which it could do if it took the route opposite from us. Which is exactly why we're going to take the old road."

"But, I thought you just said that if we take the old road to get to site B, the OGRE could head us off by taking the new one. Wouldn't that be stupid? Ahh... excuse me, sir."

MAX SPEED (km/hr)

ROAD	TRUCKS	OGRE
normal	30	40
rough	22	25



"That's all right, lieutenant. Yes, that would be stupid. And the OGRE knows we're not stupid. I hope. Therefore it will assume we're headed to site A, and thus follow us up the Post Road. It would lose more time by taking the new one if that's where we're headed."

"Just what does this buy us, Captain?" the lieutenant asked, with more than a trace of disapproval.

"About ten minutes, lieutenant About ten minutes."

"And if the OGRE guesses right?"

"We've lost."

The convoy had successfully negotiated the old Post Road without mishap and were now on the section connecting the old road with the new. Captain Hanson and the lieutenant were in the lead jeep, anxiously looking ahead. The captain broke the strained silence.

"The moment of truth arrives. But with luck..."

The lieutenant remained silent.

At the intersection, Hanson had the jeep pull over and he stood up, waving the trucks on.

"By God, I think we did it. The OGRE should have been here three minutes ago if it had tried to head us off."

The Lieutenant looked up skeptically. "You're sure?" he asked.

"Unless my computations were wrong. Okay, let's go!" The last truck had just disappeared around the corner, its tires squealing loudly in protest against the violent abuses it was forced to suffer. "I want one heavy tank, one GEV and one platoon to wait on either side of the intersection, just out of sight. They should be able to wheel around and get in a couple of good shots just as the OGRE comes aroung the last corner. Come on, let's move!"

Ten minutes later, Captain Hanson and the lieutenant, trailing the convoy once more, looked up suddenly as the sound of muffled explosions filled the air.

"First blood. Hand the radio. Baldini, can you read me? What's happening?"

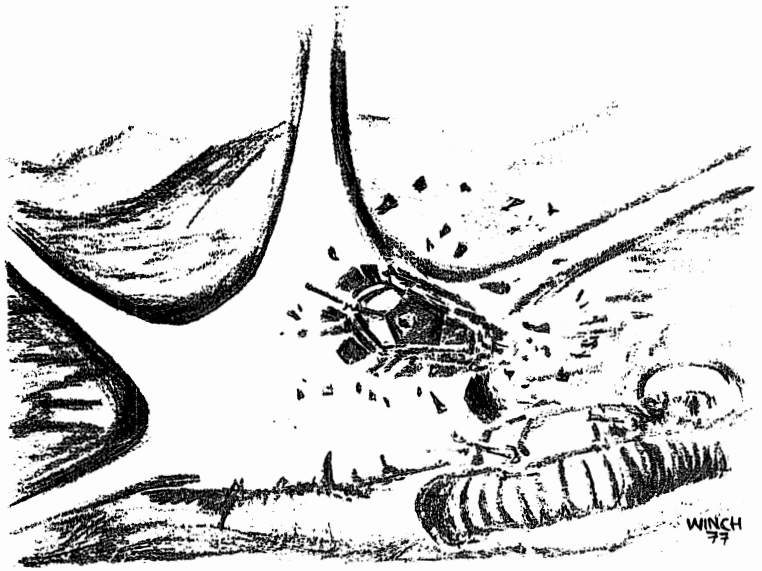
Baldini's voice came back over the speaker, weak but clear. "Yes sir, we read you. Just like you said, Captain. The OGRE came tearing around the corner, not suspecting a thing. We got in a couple good shots, but it's still coming strong. We're going in for a second attack. Over."

"Good work, Baldini."

"My God!" Baldini'a voice broke in. "It's got four missiles! But it's only the size of a Mark III. It also looks like it has two--" Baldini's voice was suddenly cut off, and a few seconds later, another loud, muffled explosion reached their ears. Hanson looked grim.

"Come on, lieutenant. Time to set another ambush."

"Is that possible, sir? Could



A Mark III have four missiles? And what else was he trying to say?"

"Could be a later version of the same mode. And I'm afraid he was telling us it has two main batteries. It's going to be rougher than I thought. Get all the drivers on the radio. Tell them to push forward and ignore all their temperature and pressure gauges. There should be a small howitzer up ahead. Get someone to check on it and make sure its manned and supplied. And try to keep raising Baldini."

Hanson's jeep raced around the corner when Sergeant Wiles suddenly slammed on the brakes. The wheels locked, sending the jeep into a slow spin but approaching the guard rail dangerously fast. As the jeep finally stopped, its front fender nudged against the rail with a gentle bump. The lieutenant let out a deep breath, but Hanson's reaction was somewhat more dramatic.

"What the hell's going ON!" he yelled, as he looked at one of the trucks, stopped solidly in the middle of the road. The driver of the truck got out and pointed down the road to the entire convoy, all stopped behind the lead truck. Its hood was lifted and three men were frantically trying to repair it.

"Damn it! Don't waste time trying to fix that beast! Shove it over the side!"

"What... what did you say, sir?"

"You heard me! Get on the radio--no, never mind, I'll do it. Coggins, is that you over there? Get your platoon and shove that damn truck over the side. And I mean now!"

Almost instantly a group of troopers surrounded the trouble vehicle and slowly shoved it toward the edge. The truck balanced for a few seconds, and then sluggishly slipped down the steep cliff. Halfway down it struck a ledge with a sickening crunch, and suddenly blossomed into flames as its cargo ignited. The sound of the explosion was deafening, and heat from the blast could be felt across the revine.

"O.K., move, move!" Hanson jumped back into his jeep and they charged off. Hanson picked up the radio again. "How's that howitzer, O.K.? Good, tell them to get ready. It will be only a few minutes."

As Hanson reached the howitzer one of the men pointed back behind him, fear contorting his features.

"Oh, Jesus, there it is," he cried.

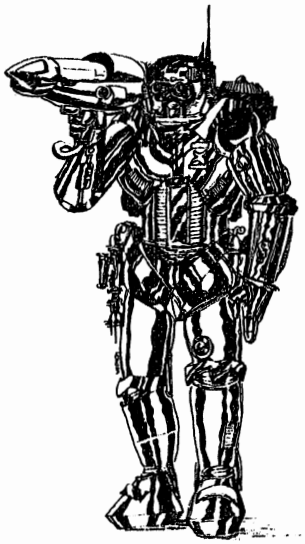
Hanson turned, and for the first time in his life felt real fear. A tank, yet more than a tank, had just come around the far corner. Tactical nuclear missiles, primary and secondary batteries, anti-personnel weapons, practically invulnerable to conventional attacks, and all controlled by a computer, unfeeling, unfearing and able to make lightening fast calculations. This, was an OGRE, the most feared weapon of its time. Even as Hanson was turning to look, a bright flash appeared from its side, the sign of a missle being launched. Accelerating quickly, it arced high over the crevice and, locking on its target, plunged down toward the convoy. Men scattered in all directions at the screaming approach. Suddenly, one of the tanks exploded in a white flash, followed by a crimson ball of flame. Almost immediately following the first, a second explosion occurred. The following truck's cargo had been ignited by the intense heat of the nuclear blast. Hanson stood and could hear the cries of the wounded and dying. Stunned, the men stood appalled at the horror so quickly wreaked. Hanson was the first to move.

"Man that gun! Get one of those missile tanks to lock in with us! We've already lost too much time!" The barrel of the howitzer lowered as it tracked the moving OGRE. A GEV went up in flames as the OGRE rolled over it. Simultaneously from the howitzer and the OGRE's main battery emitted jets of flame indicating the passage of more harbingers of death. Suddenly, the howitzer and one of the OGRE's main batteries were destroyed, the victims of the other's vengeance. The lieutenant ran over to the shattered remains of the howitzer, looking for Hanson. The captain's body lay on a rock, nearly torn in two by the explosion, one hand still desperately gripping his radio. Slowly backing from the gruesome scene, the lieutenant stared in horror. Then turning quickly, he ran back to the jeep.

"Let's go, sergeant. We may still get one more chance. It's (he refused to say the word OGRE) still got two more missiles, but if we can knock out both, some of the trucks may get through." Sergeant Wiles, seemingly unperturbed by the absence of Captain Hanson, gunned the jeep forward.

In the end, five trucks did make it through safely. They were

the only survivors of what is now known as the Battle of Iron Mountain. Little is known of how the lieutenant and his remaining force managed to destroy the OGRE's remaining missiles, but by the time the OGRE broke through the pass, it lacked the firepower to accomplish its mission and was too far behind to overrun the trucks. Almost despondently, the OGRE turned and made its way back down the mountain, subject only to the sporadic and ineffective shelling of the two howitzers guarding the entrance to launch site B.



The Battle of Iron Mountain

If OGRE is any indication of the type of games we can expect in MicroGames, we have a lot to look forward to. Fast, clean, and most of all fun, make for a very enjoyable game. This prompted the story you just read, and also the scenario which is to follow. With only a few rules modifications and some new counters, you can recreate Captain Hanson's desparate attempt to delay or damage the OGRE (which, by the way, is a Mark III-B. Try this scenario with an ordinary Mark III and see what happens. Or try it with a Mark V! Ouch!)

Rules Modifications

1. Units may stack. Maximum stacking limit (for movement, also!) is three defensive factors. Thus a heavy tank virtually blocks the road.
2. When entering a hex containing any non-infantry unit, there is a cost of one additional Movement Point (not applicable to OGRE or infantry).
3. All units (except OGRE or infantry) may attempt "accelerated" movement. On a die roll of 1, 2 or 3, the indicated unit may move 3 hexes instead of 2. On a die roll of 4 or 5, the unit moves normally. On a die roll of 6, the unit moves normally but then "stalls." A stalled vehicle may fire (if it has weapons) but may not move unless it rolls a 6 just prior to its movement phase. It may attempt to "unstall" once per turn.
4. Any non-truck unit may "shove" a stalled or disrupted unit one hex in any direction (except into a mountain hex) at the cost of one movement point of the shoving unit. Thus, you may shove units into turnouts or off the cliff (in which case they are immediately destroyed). Shoving units off cliffs is the only case when a unit may leave the road.
5. Mountain hexes (and hexsides!) block the line-of-sight for all units. This is the only case when the line of sight is blocked.
6. You will need to make some new units:

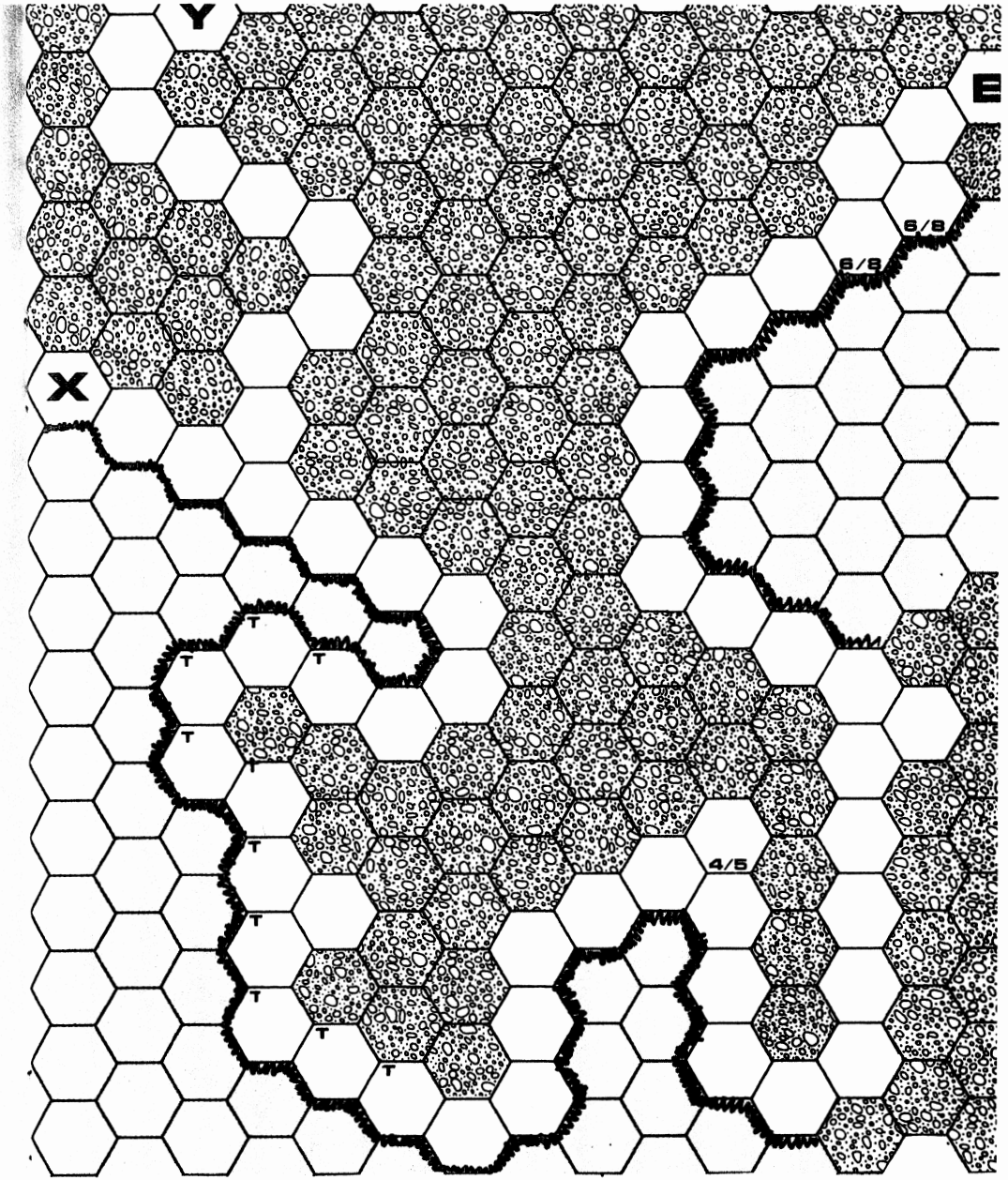
Ten trucks

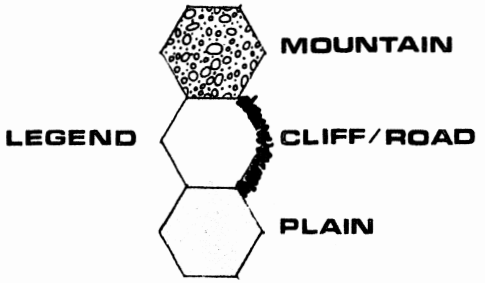
One 4/5 Howitzer

The trucks start on the hexes indicated by a small "t" in the cornor and the howitzer starts in the hex marked "4/5." Note that two normal 6/8 howitzers start on hexes marked "6/8."

7. Other starting units for the American are:
   - Two Heavy Tanks
   - Two Missile Tanks
   - Three GEV's
   - Five Infantry platoons

These units may be placed on any road hex, subject to stacking limitations.





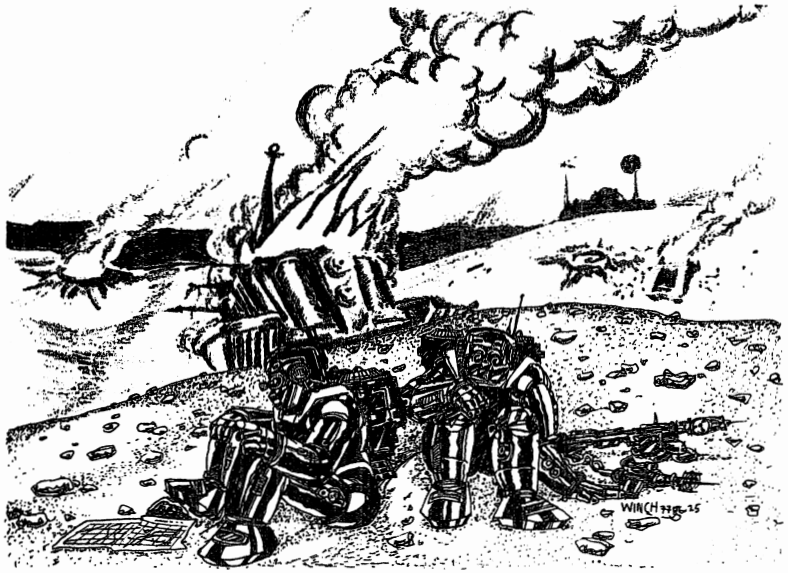
8. When a truck is destroyed ("X" result), any units in the same hex are immediately attacked with an attack strength of three, and any units in adjacent hexes are attacked with an attack strength of two. Note that a chain reaction of explosions may occur in a densely packed truck convoy.
9. An OGRE manning a truck automatically destroys it, but the OGRE's treads are attacked at 1-1 with an attack strength of two.
10. Trucks may be attacked with anti-personnel weapons.
11. Because the narrow winding mountain road is not conducive to armored combat, only one-half (rounded up) of one type of the OGRE's armament may be used against one target. Different types may be combined, however. For example, the OGRE could use half of its main batteries against one target, while using the remainder against another target.
12. When more than one unit is stacked in a hex, the OGRE player must specify which unit he is attacking. Other units are not affected (except in the case of truck explosions).

13. OGRE III-B Specifications:

```
 4 Missiles (6/5;D3)
 2 Main Battery (4/3;D4)
 4 Secondary Battery (3/2;D3)
 8 Antipersonnel (1/1 inf or trucks; D1)
45 Movement
   ØØØØ0 00000 00000 (M2)
   00000 00000 00000 (M1)
   00000 00000 00000 (M0)
```

Note that four Movement Points are already lost due to Corporal Jacob's hits.
14. The convoy player moves first. The OGRE arrives on **Hex X**, spending one Movement Factor to do so. If the convoy player exits five or more trucks from Hex B, he wins. If he exits 4 trucks, he draws. If less than 4, he loses.

Alternate scenarios are plentiful. For instance, start the convoy on Hex Y and the OGRE on hex X. (Captian Hanson guessed wrong and the OGRE guessed right. Not much of a scenario, but it shows what could have happened.) Or start the convoy five hexes closer to hex Y. (Captain Hanson didn't gain his ten minutes. Makes quite a difference!) Have fun!



OGRES & THE "FUZZY WUZZY FALLACY"

by Lawrence Duffield

In the September, 1976 Avalon Hill GENERAL, Richard Hamblen resurrected a useful concept from the mists of wargaming antiquity. Since then, I have applied the concept to everything in sight, and it has become an important tool in my wargame analysis.

Briefly, the Fuzzy Wuzzy Fallacy states that a man with a firepower of X is NOT worth twice the value as a man with a firepower of $\frac{1}{2}$X, but rather roughly $\sqrt{2}$X as much, after taking into account that one hit on either man kills just as dead. (See, the Fuzzy Wuzzys were this African tribe, and they beat a British square...)

The Fuzzy Wuzzy problem has already surfaced at METAGAMING, in STELLAR CONQUEST. Remember the GREAT STELLAR CONQUEST ATTACK vs ESCORT CALCULATION? (Yes, Virginia 2.5 Escorts CAN successfully tackle an ATTACK.) In OGRE, the problem is magnified. You see, there is only ONE Ogre. So, all you defenders out there, quivering in your Command Posts, take heart. Me and the 2205th GEV Battalion are gonna show you how to save your bacon.

The mechanism of a Fuzzy Wuzzy attack is simple. Attack the enemy over a long enough time with a great number of targets and he will be destroyed by sheer weight of numbers. Note the two critical criterion: TIME and NUMBERS of attackers.

NUMBERS are obtained by selecting Ground Effects Vehicles for the entire Armored force. In the Basic Game, this means 16 GEV, 1 Missle Tank. In the Advanced Game, 22 GEV, 7 MSL. (The Missile Tanks are the next cheapest Armor.)

GEV's have two important advantages besides numbers. They are the fastest vehicles in the game and so can choose their ground in relation to an OGRE. And, due to the second Movement Phase, GEV's can avoid all casualties from Secondary Batteries, once the OGRE's speed is 2.

TIME is the second criterion. Ogres can reach missile firing range on a Command Post in seven turns, and can overrun on the eighth, if left fully mobile. The Defender MUST reduce the Ogre's mobility by turn 3 at the latest, or at least force the Ogre to dodge and give up ground. This dictates the opening strategy.

Deploy your GEV Battalion in a loose line across the board. In the basic game, there will be gaps. Leave them near the center, so that on the initial turn, SOME firepower can be directed at the Ogre no matter where it enters. The line should be at a range of 7 hexes. MSL Tanks deploy at about 12 to 14 hexes from the front edge of the board, and toward the center. Infantry and anybody else required to set up in the rear are deployed as far forward as possible. There is no reason for the CP to set up anywhere but the rear edge of the board.

When the Ogre enters, converge as many GEV's as can reach on the beastie. Fire individual attacks against the treads. Your only mission at this time is to cut down the Ogre's speed to 2, regardless of casualities. In the Advanced Game, an alternate strategy is to knock out one Main Battery by 1--2 attacks (48% chance if 4 GEV attack) so as to reduce casualties. But the main consideration is to cut down the Ogre's speed QUICKLY. On the second movement phase, move everybody away from the Ogre and out of range of the enemy Secondary Battery. Most everyone will make it.

This process is repeated until the speed of the Ogre is 2. At this point, the fast moving GEV's are immune to enemy Secondaries entirely. Casualties should fall off drastically. Now is the time to close with the MSL Tanks, firing at long range and from widely seperated positions. Pick off more treads, or silence the main

battery, depending on the situation. At some point, you must make a concentrated effort to reduce Ogre speed to one. This will allow decent attacks by infantry and lengthen the game satisfactorily.

The Fuzzy Wuzzy technique is so effective that I believe there is no good Ogre reply. The Ogre can prolong matters by entering along the edge of the playing area (using the "Edge of the World" tactic familiar to most board-gamers), or by entering nearer the center, then lunging toward the board edge to trap any unwary defenders. In the end, however, the Ogre will fall. I haven't tested the Scenario with two Mark III Ogres against an Advanced force. Theoretically it should be more balanced.

To remedy this lack of balance, one or more of the following variants should be adopted:

A. Reduce the Defender's numbers. In Scenario 1.03, the defender gets 24 Armor points and 20 Infantry points. In Scenario 1104, 45 Armor; 30 Infantry.

B. Change the GEV cost. (3.013) (CHANGE) GEV's are purchased at a cost of 3 Attack Points each.

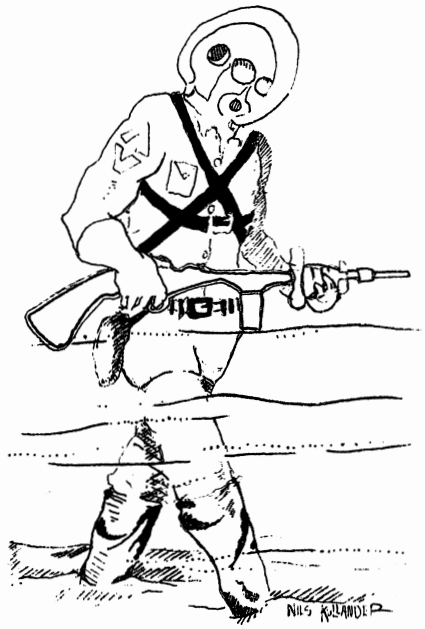
C. Reduce GEV speed. (8.06) (Addition) GEV's have a speed of 3 per phase.

D. Increase Ogre speed. (8.07) (Addition) Ogre Mark IV: Speed 4; Movement Points 60, MSL's: 4, 1 Main Battery, 6 Secondaries, 8 Anti-personnel.

E. Increase Movement Points: (6.05) (CHANGE) Ogre Mark III: 60 M, Mark V: 90 M.

While we are talking variants, why not Mobile Artillery? Why should gun artillery be less mobile that it is today? The U.S. Army currently plans to change gun position after EVERY FIRE MISSION to avoid counterbattery fire. I don't see this trend changing much. So, allow each Howitzer a speed of 2, but require it to remain stationery in order to fire.

OGRE is a FUN game. These variants should keep it from being just one bunch of Fuzzy Wuzzys against an Ogre, and, just maybe, give the poor mechanical beastie a chance at the goodies in the ol' CP.



ANOTHER §‡@**$%&?!! OGRE ARTICLE

by Steve Jackson

There are two reasons for that title. The first is that, to the best of my knowledge, there are 3 other OGRE pieces in this TSG. The second is that I'm trying to cover four different subjects. So I gave up looking for an appropriate title and just started writing.

The subjects I'm going to cover are: (1) Responses to OGRE...some of the better mail we got. (2) The GEV problem: a lesson in game design. (3) An upcoming game in the "OGRE universe," and notes on the Mark I, II, IV, and VI Ogres. (4) Possible rule revisions for the original OGRE game,

THE MAILBOX

One of the most pleasing things about OGRE, to me, was the volume and quality of the mail it generated. Letters, questions, and variants, and stories for TSG...it's been interesting to see what others have done with the OGRE concepts. "Iron Mountain," in this issue, is a good example. I've played it repeatedly, and enjoyed it. Nice work. About the only thing that hasn't come in is new art. Winch Chung's stuff is great...but it would be interesting to see other artists' interpretations.

All in all, the mail is great. Some of it makes me wonder: "Dear Metagaming: Is the Howitzer considered to be infantry?" No, it isn't. But most of the mail shows a good deal of thought. I plan to steal the best comments and suggestions for future OGRE games... crediting the originators. Fair is fair. A sampling of the better mail to date:

Mark Ratner (who designed SPACE MARINES, and says he'll be judging a large OGRE tournament at GENCON) sent in 3 pages of economic calculations on Ogres (he doubts they'd be cost-effective) and some excellent, if complicated, advanced movement rules. He also suggests (as have several others) that there should be provisions for mobile howitzers. (Wait for the new game.)

Tracy B. Harms sent in a suggestion for a Mark IV with a starting MA of 4. We'd been playtesting something similar...but his way was more logical, and when you see the proposed Mark IV specs later in this article, the movement's done the way he suggested.

Greg Costikyan reviewed OGRE in his zine URF DURFAL...called it "the ideal game to play whilst stoned." Okay, Greg. He made one good point, and I quote: "it is not clear whether Ogres expend movement points when they move..." Well, this is true. It had never occurred to me that anyone could think they DID - and, in fact, it seems to have bothered no one else - but, in fact, I DID FAIL TO MAKE THAT CLEAR. Mea maxima culpa. Rules should be perfect; that will be corrected in the 2d edition. And Ogres do NOT lose movement points when they move. (Greg's Ogre Magi, in the last TSG, DO expend movement points when they move...but that's another story. His. I doubt any aircraft at all would be viable in the Ogre world...but the CSAs are fun, as a game, which is all you can ask.)

Several people have sent in "perfect" defenses relying heavily on Howitzers. I hate to say this, but my own Ogres go through those like a knife through butter. What strategy do you use to make six or seven Howitzers work?

And a LOT of people...too many to list...have pointed out that a defense composed of all GEVs wins the Basic Scenario most of the time and the Advanced Scenario too often. They're right. Which leads to...

THE GEV PROBLEM

In a nutshell: If a GEV fires on an Ogre and moves 4 away, the Ogre cannot kill it next turn, no matter what, if it has lost its missiles and EITHER its MB OR its 3 movement. Therefore, a mob of GEVs can harry an Ogre to death, unless the GEV player gets overconfident and lets the Ogre cat-and-mouse his force to

death. This is not good.

This had two causes. The first was the counter mix. We originally planned to provide 56 counters, in three distinct shades...light gray, dark gray, and white. But, at the last minute, we found we could afford to put in twice as many. And the printer fouled up...on the counter sets, light and dark gray look the same once cut out. So, instead of having 8 GEVs available, a defense commander has 22... making some new strategies possible.

People still seem to enjoy Ogre. I like it myself. But at this point, I can't rate it better than fair as a wargame. But it seems to be pretty good science fiction. It gives people ta chance to exercise their imagination (and blood lust), and the mechanics are adequate to support the illusion.

But we still have the Super GEV - and, worse, the Useless Heavy. IN SPITE OF the counter mix glitch, the GEV is, value for value, the best unit, and the heavy tank the worst. Under certain circumstances a couple of heavies can chew up an Ogre...but four GEVs do it better. You don't really notice how good a GEV really is, though, until you take it in against a force of regular armor units. If six GEVs attack six heavies on clear ground, they kill the heavies and take no losses in the process.

The fact that the armor units weren't balanced against each other doesn't distress me much; they were (originally) intended only to balance against an Ogre. (But see below!) They are almost balanced, except for the Heavy. What happened? I made a mistake. (Yes, folks. Steve Jackson just admitted to a mistake. Hell will freeze over any second.) I'm owning up to it, not because I like looking dumb, but because I see a LOT of game designs with similar errors. I doubt I'll ever do it again...and, if I point it out here, maybe you won't, either.

It's a question of COST and BALANCE. Each of the armor units was given a balance of speed, defense, and firepower, roughly analogous to those of present-day units (except for the GEV, and we'll have those within a decade.) Then, having carefully balanced the units on a one-for-one basis, what did I do? I turned around and wrote the rules so that a Heavy "cost" twice as much as a GEV. Therefore, it's about half as cost-effective.

Why didn't it show up in playtesting? Two reasons. (1) The game is, as I said, good science fiction. We were all having so much fun that, if the Ogre won about half the time, we were happy. (2) Through one of those annoying glitches, ALL of the playtesters LIKED heavy tanks. Seldom, if ever, was a defense tried without some heavies. And they do work very well to clobber a weakened Ogre.

So why didn't the over-strength of the GEV show up in playtesting? We playtested a lot - literally hundereds of games - and we didn't always limit ourselves to the counter mix we planned to supply. It didn't show up because using all GEVs "seemed" like a dumb strategy. "Everybody knows" that a balanced force is more flexible. I remember trying an all-GEV defense just once, just as we tried an all-howitzer defense just once. It didn't work - at the time.

The moral here is: if you want to get all the bugs out of a game, PLAYTEST THE DUMB STRATEGIES. If you are doing a Civil War game, and your rules give the battle to the side that charges uphill against entrenched positions, you don't have much of a game,..but if you playtest with Civil War experts, you'll never find out about it, because they'll never be stupid enough to try. PLAYTEST THE DUMB STRATEGIES. That was the second lesson I got from OGRE. Make sure that the things you don't think should work DON'T work. Or you've got some redesign to do.

Okay. Enough preaching. Suffice it to say that the new OGRE game will have these bugs debugged. Yes, you heard me right. A new OGRE game.

GEV

The working title for the second game in the OGRE series is "GEV." (I will cheerfully accept suggestions for a better name.) It'll be a MicroGame simulating combat between the powered infantry and small armor units of circa 2085.

GEV will introduce a number of new rules, including terrain effects and stacking. It will also introduce at least one more "regular" unit type, and give specifications (if there's room) for the OGRE MK IV.

The way we will fit all this in is by NOT repeating the "Ogre" rules from OGRE...just the armor and infantry rules. In other words, if you have OGRE and buy GEV, you will be able to play Ogres on the GEV map...and we WILL supply terrain rules and scenarios for Ogres. But if you <u>don't</u> have Ogre, you can buy GEV and get a tactical armor game that stands by itself...with a number of optional references to things called Ogres, and a few OGRE MK IV counters.

That way, we have our cake and eat it too. GEV will stand by itself, and play well. (Incidentally, the GEV map will be bigger than the OGRE map.) GEV will also tie in 100% with OGRE. And EACH game will have stuff that the other lacks...so the total amount of material is greater.

There's a possible third OGRE microgame in the works, as well as a bigger game pulling all the rules together and supplying a LARGE tactical map. But those are quite a ways in the future. GEV is only a few months off. I hope.

In order to make the armor units for the GEV game face one another on a fair basis, there'll be some changes in their abilities. And when we put out a second edition of OGRE, we MAY change them in there, as well. So read the next section critically; we want <u>your</u> comments.

REVISIONS FOR THE "ORIGINAL" OGRE

OGRE is selling fast. We'll reprint it in a few months. We will DEFINITELY be making improvements in the physical quality of the game; we MAY revise a few of the rules to conform with GEV and improve balance between the armor units.

Physical changes will be as follows:

THE MAP will have larger hexes, and will have 3 fewer hexrows on the "bottom." In other words, the Ogre starts 3 hexes closer. we MAY change the map graphics to a "realistic" portrayal of craters and rubble. Comments? Do you prefer the present "abstract" map?

THE COUNTERS will be unchanged, unless the unit abilities are changed - see below.

THE RULEBOOK <u>may</u> have a full-color cover. It all depends. Is that something you'd like to see, or do you even care?

Rule changes under consideration:

(NOTE. Before I go any farther, two things. The rule revisions below are taken from a DRAFT. We're inviting you to test them. They are NOT final. SECOND: <u>ANY</u> rule revisions that go into the second edition of OGRE will be printed in full in TSG. If you WANT to buy the 2d edition (like because you wore your first one out playing it) that's fine. But <u>nobody</u> should feel like they "have" to get a new copy.)

(a) GEVs can move 4 hexes on their FIRST movement phase, but only 3 after combat.
(b) Heavy tanks have a MA of 3.
(c) Infantry can cross "rubble" hexsides. (This was Robert Schultz' suggestion.)
(d) An Ogre loses <u>two</u> movement points whenever it rams or is rammed by an enemy armor unit. Exception: When an OGRE rams a GEV, it loses nothing. (A GEV ramming an Ogre costs the Ogre two movement points.)

And remember the shorter map.

If these changes are made, the setup rule will also be changed, as follows:

BASIC SCENARIO. The defense gets any 14 armor units (howitzers count as 2 units) and 20 points of infantry. All but 20 attack strength points of this force must set up ON or BEHIND the line between the craters at the map edges.

ADVANCED SCENARIOS. The defense gets any 22 armor units (again, howitzers count as 2 units) and 35 points of infantry. All but 35 attack strength points of this force must set up on or behind the line.

Victory conditions remain the same.

Your comments on these rule changes are solicited. If you want to playtest them, write and let me know what you think. Your comments will weigh heavily in (1) whether we revise the 2d edition rules at all, and (2) what the revisions are. I'll read every letter, and reply to as many of the good ones as I can get to. We're going to do our own playtesting - plenty of it - but we don't mind help. Good playtesters are hard to come by, and we're always interested in finding more.

THE OTHER OGRES, ETC.

We're also playtesting other cybertanks for use in later games. Therefore, below are our present "models" for five other computer-guided monsters. Again, we invite you to playtest these, and see what you think - suggestions, art, new scenarios, ways to balance these with existing scenarios, etc.

OGRE MARK I

The Combine's first cybertank experiment. Simply a beefed-up heavy with computer guidance.

```
1MB 4/3 D4
4AP 1/1 against INF (etc.) only
15 movement 00000  drops to 2
            00000  drops to 1
            00000  drops to 0
```

OGRE MARK II

The Mark I worked, but it was too expensive, considering that it was no meaner than a standard heavy - just harder to kill. So the Mark II was designed with more guns and armor.

```
1 MB   4/3 D4
2 2B   3/2 D2
6 AP   1/1 D1 against INF, etc.
30 movement 00000 00000 drops to 2
            00000 00000 drops to 1
            00000 00000 drops to 0
```

Then came the Mark III - the first really fearsome Ogre, and the first one to be useful as a battle-line unit. You know about the Mark III. The Mark III's success inspired enemy copies... like the IIIB in "Iron Mountain" (this issue). It also inspired a more-than-copy. The first wholly Paneuropean cybertank was called "Fencer" by the Combine. It lacked the characteristic Ogre "tower," and carried a new type of weapon: the missile rack.

PANEUROPEAN "FENCER" CYBERTANK

```
4 MSL RACK  D4
20 MISSILES 00000 00000
            00000 00000
4 2B 3/2 D3
8 AP 1/1 D1 against inf, etc. only
45 mvmt 00000 00000 00000 drops to 2
        00000 00000 00000 drops to 1
        00000 00000 00000 drops to 0
```

The Fencer has no main batteries, and only four secondaries. Its main weapons are the missile racks. Each missile rack has a defensive strength of 4 and can fire one regular missile (6/5) per turn. That is, an undamaged Fencer can fire four missiles per turn. The Fencer carries 20 missiles; check each one off as fired. When all missile racks are dead OR all 20 missiles are fired or dead, the Fencer cannot use missiles. Destruction of a missile rack destroys one missile. This is the ONLY way to kill a Fencer missile; they are stored INSIDE.

OGRE MARK IV

The Combine turned around and copied the Paneuropean missile racks for the Ogre Mk IV, adapting them to the Ogre design and their own desire for a light "raider" unit...

```
1 MB  4/3 D4
2 2B  3/2 D3
3 MSL RACKS  D4
15 MSLS 00000 00000 00000
8 AP 1/1 D1 against inf., etc. only

60 MVMT starting at 4 MA.
   00000 00000 00000 drops to 3
   00000 00000 00000 drops to 2
   00000 00000 00000 drops to 1
   00000 00000 00000 drops to 0
```

OGRE MARK VI

The biggest Ogre ever built - although later cybertanks of other designs massed more.

```
3 MB  4/3  D4
6 2B  3/2  D3
2 MSL RACKS  D4
20 MSLS 00000 00000 00000 00000
16 AP  1/1 D1 vs inf., etc. only
75 MVMT starting at 3 MA
   00000 00000 00000 00000 00000 (2)
   00000 00000 00000 00000 00000 (1)
   00000 00000 00000 00000 00000 (0)
```

For ramming, assume that MK IV and Fencer are same size, and that each succeeding marque of Ogre is "bigger" that the preceding ones. A MK IV or Fencer does 4 dice damage when it rams. A MK VI does 6 dice damage. MK I Ogres are treated just like ordinary heavy tanks for ramming.

Have fun with these - let us know how they perform for you. A MK IV and a Fencer should be about equal - Fencer a little better in slugging matches. Either one should kill a MK III. A MK V should be able to take either an IV or a Fencer - but it gets badly hurt. A VI can smash anything.

If you find good ways of putting these into scenarios, let us know.

Have fun, and may a Mark V not walk through your house.

News

From METAGAMING:

*Games by other publishers will no longer be stocked by METAGAMING. Various problems in handling outside games and the desire to concentrate on METAGAMING products were cited as reasons. Discounts on the entire line of METAGAMING products will continue to be given to TSG susbscribers.

*Official notice: METAGAMING notifies all parties that the name "MicroGame" is the trademarked, copyrighted property of METAGAMING, and may not be used by any others in any form.

*Change of address notices must be made in writing by TSG subscribers. METAGAMING will not trace addresses. Bulk mail, such as TSG, is not automatically forwarded by the post office (unless the customer agrees to pay postage). It is important that subscribers notify METAGAMING immediately about any address change to assure uninterrupted delivery of TSG.

Orders returned by the post office because of a change of address will be returned to stock, and remailed only after the customer notifies METAGAMING of the correct address.

METAGAMING will continue to pay all postage on orders.

*MELEE Advertisement Goof! The name for METAGAMING's fantasy role system had originally been Swords and Sorcery. Because of copyright complications and usage of "Swords and Sorcery" with other game materials, the name THE FANTASY TRIP was selected. However, Swords and Sorcery may appear in some ads for MELEE. The goof is ours.

From Tony Watson: "TSG #9 featured a review called 'Triplanetary Variant V/2' by Kelly Moorman. I followed this up by sending John Railing (Clear Creek, IN), the variant's designer, the listed fee (75¢).

That was about three months ago. Railing cashed my check, and two requests later (both unreplied to), I'm still without the variant.

What do I expect you to do? Not a thing really; I just thought the editor of TSG should know of this somewhat fraudulent incident."

For gamers in the Houston area, a new store devoted to all forms of wargames. It is Der Kriegsvorrat; 1912 West Dallas; Houston. It carries miniatures, wargames, rules, magazines, and accessories, and also provides a playing area for weekend games.

THE IMPERIUM is an amateur game publication which features game reviews and a play-by-mail section. For information, write J. Jacocks; Box 549; Georgetown, CT 06829.

THE EMERALD TABLET is a new release from CREATIVE WARGAMES WORK SHOP INC.; 330 East 6th Street, 1E; New York, NY 10003. The game is a set of rules for fighting fantasy battles with miniatures. It contains 60 pages, a reference sheet, and magic symbol sheets.

ORILLA, a game of future man to man combat in miniatures, is available from McEwan Miniatures; 840 West 17th South; Salt Lake City UT 84104. It is a rules booklet designed as a supplement to the STARGUARD rules, and cannot stand alone.

THE DUNGEONEER by the Fantastic Dungeoning Society, is an amateur fanzine devoted to D & D play. It contains good Jaquays art and above average content. For more information, contact Paul Jaquays; 3105 Dorothy Lane; Spring Arbor, MI 49283.

Conventions

"The Return of ORCCON" will be held at California State University Fullerton, on January 13-15, 1978. Events will include boardgames, D & D, miniatures, and a STELLAR CONQUEST tournament. Cost is $2.00 to pre-register or $3.00 at the door. For more information, contact James John Myers; 13718 Norbeck Drive; La Mirada, CA 90638.

SunCon, the thirty-fifth world science fiction convention, will be held over Labor Day weekend, September 2-5, 1977, at the Hotel Fountainbleau, Miami Beach, Florida. This is the major SF event of the year with SF fans from all over the world attending. Inquiries should be directed to Michael J. Walsh; 946 Montpelier Street; Baltimore, MD 21218; phone (301)467-3106.

Great Lakes Convention presented by the Western New York Wargamers Association will be held September 16-18, 1977, at the Sheraton Lockport Inn; 515 South Transit Road: Lockport, NY 14094. Events will include tournaments, seminars, modeling contest, and miniature competition.

GenCon West sponsored by T.S.R. and Outpost Hobbies, Inc. will be held at Villa Motel; San Mateo, CA; September 3, 4, and 5, 1977. If interested, write P.O. Box 4042; Foster City, CA 94404 or call Thomas and Mary Jean Vaughan at (415)573-6747. Events include 24 boardgame gournaments, free movies, manuafacturers respresentatives, authors, demonstrations, prizes, medieval combat exhibitions, and many surprises.

WARCON IV will be held January 27-29, 1978, at Texas A & M University. The METAGAMING staff will attend for the third year. More information next issue on the oldest Texas wargame convention.

TEXCON will be held March 24-26, 1978, at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas. This will be the largest, best organized and planned game con yet in the Southwest. METAGAMING will be in attendance in a major way.

TEXCON will be distinguished by a number of unique gaming events. A huge D & D tournament layout for miniatures play is already near completion. "Aftermath" is a running multi-player scenario in a bombed-out city, using SNIPER rules with a slaver post and supply columns. When the METAGAMING staff isn't manning its room, look for them in "Aftermath." This will be a STELLAR CONQUEST tourney among other events. More details will be given in later issues of TSG.

METAGAMING will introduce the first gamemaster's package of THE FANTASY TRIP at TEXCON. It is THE FANTASY TRIP: IN THE LABYRINTH and there will be a METAGAMING-sponsored tourney for it. METAGAMING also plans to have space for one or two boards of GODSFIRE that can run for several days. At least open play for all MicroGames will be available.

For information contact: TEXCON; Box 12385; Austin, TX 78711.

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE is a new game release from the publisher of SWORDPLAY. Available from Ursine Engineering; 6805A Carolyn Road; Louisville, KY 40214. Game seems simple with basic rules running about 500-600 words. Full-color plasticized checkerboard style map, plastic chips, brief rules booklet, warp chits, and plastic baggie. A review will appear in TSG.

FIRE AND MOVEMENT is a relatively new bi-monthly publication. Single issues are $1.50 and a six-issue subscription is $8.00. Non-U.S. subscribers, add $2.00, all in U.S. funds. This is the best written, most interesting general wargaming publication currently available, in the opinion of the TSG staff. Write Baron Publishing Company, Box 820; La Puente, CA 91747.

The Outpost is back. Outpost Hobbies, Inc., northern California's wargames specialists, has opened a new store after their big fire. Write for a catalogue at Box 3042; Santa Clara, CA 95051.

News from Origins on the Charles Roberts Award: Best Tactical Game--TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD (SPI); Best Strategic Game--RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN (AH); Best Graphics and Physical Systems--AVALANCHE (GDW); Best Professional Magazine--STRATEGY AND TACTICS; Best Semi-Professsional Magazine--BATTLEFIELD/JAGDPANTHER.

Clubs

In response to many requests for aid in contacting local gamers, THE SPACE GAMER will give brief mention to clubs that do some science fiction and fantasy gaming. Send the name of the club, address, and other pertinent information to METAGAMING; Box 15346; Austin, TX 78761.

THE AXIS NEWSLETTER plans to up-grade to professional wargaming magazine status. With issue #7 it expands to 24-30 photo-offset pages. For information about this publication, write Glen Taylor; 6908 Buchanan Street; Landover Hills, MD 20784.

SPACE MARINES, a set of rules for miniature play, containing 71 pages in an 8½ X 11" format, is available from Fun Tac Games; 464 Lenox Avenue: South Orange, NJ 07079.

STAR EMPIRES has been released by TSR, INC. and copies have been sent by first class mail to all who ordered the game from METAGAMING during the past months. If any customer has not yet received the copy he had ordered previously, please let METAGAMING know immediately. No new orders for the game will be taken, however.

THE BATTLE BEFORE THE PUBLIC SANITATION FACILITY AT GURIK: 2043 A. S.

by Rich Bartucci

In an obscure corner of Tekumel, generally ignored by its more popular historians, the few inpoverished kingdoms struggling for control over the niggardly but precious iron ore deposits on Klaektu Island fought a series of vicious wars during the period 1997-2063 A.S. Involved were the kingdoms of Vulch'har and Yull'krunk on one side and the P'twee League on the other--a coalition consisting of the Grand Duchy of Ios'twik, the Bafonies of Hurko-La and Grunducha, and the B'goshta Republic.

The armies, tactics and resources on each side were so evenly matched that, in the force of only insignificant outside interference, the struggle continued over sixty-six years, utterly depopulating Klaektu Island and reducing the combattant nations to abject poverty.

Perhaps the best way to give the student of Tekumel some idea of the nature of these wars, is to describe one of the four hundred and thirty-six battles between the Kingdoms and the League. I have taken the liberty of selecting one of the more noteworthy contests, the Battle Before the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik, a small mining town not more than eighteen kilometers from the vital iron ore deposits. Why Gurik, putatively a mining town, should be situated eighteen kilometers from the mines is a mystery that continues to puzzle scholars to this day.

In the interest of preserving authenticity, I have abstracted the story of the battle from the diaries of Chumbott-Kwuk, a senior subaltern in the IIIrd Legion of the Fifth Palace of the Second Kingdom of Yull'krunk,("Sanguine Spearpoints") who later went on to betray his native land and rise to a high rank in the armies of the P'twee League before his assassination in a prestigious peg-house in 2064 A.S.

Keeping in mind that the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik controlled the entrance of the Uch'whukk Valley--the primary route of access to the ore deposits--let us attend upon the story of Chumbott-Kwuk as the day of battle dawns:

--On that morning, our troops began rising from their sleeping mats and there was much groaning and clasping of hand to brow as the winefumes of the previous night's debauch wrought havoc among the ranks. Many were heard blaspheming, each according to his own Deity, at the dampness of the grass and the foul taste of the k'pukk fat and the v'nka-gruel served out by the kitchens. Captain Hucch-mulg, my squadron commander, was returning to headquarters from an early-morning trip to the latrines when I intercepted him to ask what would be our dispositions for the coming battle. I could see the camps and cookfires of the League's army across the Gungk-hro River, not two klicks away.

"Well, Kwuk, if you must know, we'll be opening with 'The Whore's Invitation' (a deployment wherein the flanks are advanced while the center falls back with the troopers appearing reluctant to close with the enemy). We'll come out of that into 'The **Prong of Gorbuna**' (in which the center advances at the trot to smash into the enemy, thereupon sending out small parties of shock troops at five-second intervals to further disrupt the opposing force) and then 'The Wall of Jul'vucka', (where the Legion forms a single line and hurls insults at the enemy). If we're flanked or they get the better of us, we switch to 'The Rabbits of Nosh-P'toowee'(in which the troopers of the Legion turn tail and depart from the field of battle with all possible haste). Have you got that firmly fixed in your tiny mind, boy?"

"**Yes** sir," I replied, "and what corps will be to either flank?"

My captain looked a bit irked, but said, "On our left we'll have the IVth Legion of the Temple of Prugg-Fyrd, 'The Puce Fanatics'. On the right'll be the Vulch'har Legion IX, 'The Mincing Marauders'. You've heard of them, perhaps?"

"Of course, sir," quoth I, "everyone has heard of King Ulderu's fierce force of nancies. Indeed, their rose-and-aqua banner has been honorably blood-spattered in many a battle."

"Yeah, I know. Old Ulderu pressed the most militant of Vulch' har's homosexuals into that Legion. He wanted to give 'em a chance to prove their loyalty and, incidentally, get killed off in great numbers." He glanced at our allies, fixing their makeup in preparation for battle, and shrugged. "At least it should end his homosexual-rights problems in a few years. Those babies take the heaviest

casualties of any Legion I've ever seen."

"And what is that rabble arrayed before us, sir?"

"It's the IInd Provisional Mob, Local Peasantry. The provost companies went out a couple of days ago and gathered up every bumpkin they could get their trucheons on. With those cast-off pikes, scythes and rakes, they should last about three minutes. Hear 'em moaning?"

I could detect the low-keyed wailing of perhaps two thousand wretches, the remnants of the once-triving populace of Klaektu Island. They would not fight well, and their evolutions would not be the most elegant on the battlefield, but cutting through their shrieking ranks might tire the infidel soldiers of the League before they could get to us. I nodded contentedly.

Captain Hucch-mulg hied himself off to headquarters for a last-minute briefing from Tribune Wuxtradicha, our Legion commander. I busied myself, with the aid of my Underofficers, in bashing the two hundred men of my company into formation. Before long, we and the other units of the proud "Sanguine Spearpoints" stood with our faces to the enemy, ranked in "The Whore's Invitation". I stole a glance to the left, where the Puce Fanatics were gathered around their priests. These gaudily-caprisoned fellows were performing many unusual and obscene acts with some chickens. I could only shrug and remember the works of the great philosopher and pederast, Truddo-Quar: "One man's religion is another man's bull".

Across the river, I could see the troops of the League preparing for battle. The scarlet-and-brown flags of the Duchy of Ios'twik topped a force of perhaps three thousand men bearing what looked to be huge battle-axes. Behind them were assembled possibly two thousand archers under the blue-and-black colors of Grunducha. Before the main enemy force was a skirmish line of several P'kuna, their scaley three-legged forms skittering across the pebbled river-bank. Each bore the traditional two-handed shield and the chopping sword so well-beloved of their race. Around the neck of one of their officers I could see a necklace of mummified human testicles, and I vowed myself a Chlen-hide codpiece as soon as I got out of this battle.

To the left of the Ios'twikki was a body of about a thousand lightly armed barbarians bearing the green-and-violet of the despised B'goshta Republic. I could see the glint of silver in the ranks as the barbarian mercenaries counted their pay before going into action.

Far to our right lay the vital Public Sanitation Facility. In and around it was deployed the Ist Legion of the Third Palace of the Third Kingdom of Yull'Krunk, "The Merciless Mecerators", prideful in their commander, Tribune Buelek-Wach the Bloody. Behind them in reserve were three thousand Shukk of the Vulch'har Legion VI, "The Shaggy Horrs", mercenaries who had gathered under King Ulderu's command for the prospect of gold, loot and rape (primarily of the mules in the League's baggage trains).

Gathered before the catapults, onagers and trebuchets of our artillery--which was mostly Yull' krunkki--was the Vulch'har Legion III, "The Unwashed", whose ripe aroma, borne of a religious prejudice against bathing, was perceptible even in the front ranks. They were unique in being armed with boat hooks, shields, hand-axes and slings. The gods only knew what their commander had in mind as for the tactics they would use; perhaps the hooks were to gather the enemy into the IIIrd's fetid ranks, where the smell would kill them.

When he could see that all were in their appointed places, the Kingdoms' commander, General Ruchaka-Van of Vulch'har, gave the sign to his trumpeters. The three-note call to advance blared out, and with bolts and missiles from our artillery falling into the ranks of the Ios'twikki before us, we herded the IInd Provisional Mob across the shallow Gungk-hro and into the fray. With many cries and appeals to the gods, the peasants, our implacable pikes prodding their arses, threw themselves upon the well-armed enemy. There was prodigious bloodshed and many curses from the troops in our front ranks as we piked many a reluctant soldier of the IInd as he fled. Before long, the Provisionals worn thin in several places and our own legion was in contact with the foe. I could hear axe-heads ringing against Chlen-hide-bound pike shafts and the screams of the dead and dying on our left and right while we in the center, true to "The Whore's Invitation", kept well back. Then came the cry from behind as Tribune Wuxtra-Dicha shouted his immortal command, "Gig 'em, boys, gig the living Underworld out of 'em!"

Instantly, we swung into "The Prong of Gorbuna", charging the brown-clad soldiery of Ios'twik. As we advanced, I recall thinking that perhaps it might have been best after all if I had followed my uncle's advice and stayed at my piano at the House of Inexpensive Joy back in Uuna Town. Then we were in among the enemy, and I was too busy to do aught but protect myself from grievous injury. As per the dictates of the formation, we sent forth ten-man parties of berserkers to raise havoc behind the enemy's front lines. As these brave warriors thrust themselves into the hostile ranks, I could barely suppress a tear at the thought that I might have been called upon to join them. Thank Jaestu, Goddess of Luck!

To our left we could hear the sound of slaughter as the Puce Fanatics slammed themselves against the B'goshta mercenaries and crushed them beneath their war-hammers and halberds. The League's reserves, about two thousand heavy pikemen in the orange-and-grey of Hurko-La, were thundering toward the rampant devotees of Prugg-Fyrd, who were now shrieking in religious ectasy as they routed out the liver and spleens of their fallen foeman.

Beyond the Puce Fanatics, the Vulch'har Legion VIII, "Persistent Flatulence", was engated with a smaller force of Ios'twikki halberdiers, pushing them gradually back and away from the bloodstained waters of the Gungk-hro. To our right, "The Mincing Marauders" were in heated combat with a large body of B'goshtan regulars. We heard from runners that our brother Legion, "The Merciless Macerators", was being assailed by Grunduchan heavy infantry at the Public Sanitatation Facility. The work was afoot that Buelek-Wach had vainly sought leave from General Ruchaka-Van to advance against the League troops in his sector so that he might fall upon the body of archers they defended and thus end their galling rain of missiles upon his men.

Our portion of the battlefield, the Puce Fanatics were locked in combat with the Hurko-La pikemen, the B'goshtan barbarians having dissolved into fleeing tatters before the reinforcements could rescue them. It was at that moment that our great General unleashed "The Unwashed", our principal reserve, to join with the devotees of Prugg-Fyrd in thrusting back the Hurko-La and turning the flank of the Ios'twikki axemen to our own front.

The Grunduchan archers, rendered hitherto unable to act effectively by the swiftness of our assault, now poured fire into "The Unwashed", killing many. They could not stem the Vulch'har momentum, however, and in the time it would take to rape an unconscious woman, the boat-hooks and hand-axes of the bathless terrors were doing fearsome work among the ranks of not only the Ios'twikki soldiers before us but the Grunduchan archers as well. When we pressed the Ios'twikki one last time, they came apart and, with cries of distress, fled from us in mortal terror. Soon our own men, tired but exultant at the tide of victory that now ran in our favor, were hewing at the Grunduchan archers and had turned the flank of the B'goshtans opposing "The Mincing Marauders". Even I, but a senior subaltern, could tell that the League's last hope lay in beginning an orderly retreat while some units remained yet unrouted.

I was to learn later that the League general, Lord Thur'kha of Ios'twik, was attempting to do just that. His last unengaged force, a body of two thousand Hurko-La pikemen deployed to our right, was shifting to support the B' goshtans trapped between our own Legion and "The Mincing Marauders".

When Ruchaka-Van noted this move on the part of the enemy, he gave the long-awaited order to release Buelek-Wach the Bloody and the three thousand Shukk of "The Shaggy Horrors" in a bid to smash in the League's weakened left flank. With war cries and trumpetings, the Bloody One led his legion across the Gungk-hro.

They say that the Grunduchans fought well before the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik, with almost every man falling where he stood as the beastlike Shukk and the bestial "Macerators" swarmed over them in a howling, horrible wave. In the time it takes a man to empty a well-filled bladder, the valiant northerners were no more.

Their flanks bared on left and right, the cool-headed B' goshtans began a fighting retreat, gathering in the shattered remnants of the Ios'twikki legion that had opposed us at the battle's outset. I could see their commander, a squat ugly man in black, swearing and striking at his men to keep them in order.

(Translator's Note: The commanding officer of the B' goshtan brigade in this action was

Senax Tavishoor T'naza, a renowed scholar and famous general, author of The Seven Joys of Sodomy.)

I believe that by the time the force of Buelek-Wach's attack was spent, only three or four bodies of troops remained intact on the League's side, all of them hard-pressed by our unrelenting assaults. Our artillaey wrought terrible staughter among those fleeing the field of battle.

With the swiftness and forcfulness of their attack, the Puce Fanatics had overrun the command stand of the Lord Thur'kha, killing most of his guard and all of his infidel priests. The League's general was barely able to escape with his life.

All around me, my exhausted troops were falling to the ground, their breaths torn from them is sobbing gasps. We had been engaged since the very first, and had been in action constantly. I watched as my men waved "The Unwashed" onward in their pursuit of the broken enemy. To our right and ahead of us, I could see the huge hairy forms of "The Shaggy Horrors" pressing the B'goshtans and slashing at enemy stragglers. Nearby, the decimated ranks of "The Mincing Marauders" reclined on the bloodstained ground, bone-weary much as we, but already fetching mirrors from their shoulderbags to rearrange their elaborate coiffures.

Soon Captain Hucch-mulg, covered with dust and blood but still very much in command, came striding among us. He noticed me as I sat upon the scarred turf and stood before me, smiling.

"We kicked their asses today, Kwuk," he said. "Those smelly Vulch'har boys even overran an Ios' twikki army brothel, so there'll be something for us to dip our wicks in."

"Then truly we are blessed by Hum'bugka, god of valor-in-arms!" I exclaimed, rising to my feet. "All honor to Him!"

"Yeah, well, maybe so." My illustrious commander stopped to blow his nose between thumb and forefinger. "Seems to me we gave the old bastard a lot of help. Who knows? Maybe we'll even get a couple of medals out of this."

Alas, this was not to be, for, as usual, the eyes of the great lords were elsewhere when our deeds of valor were done. Nonetheless, I did soon after receive promotion to captain's rank, taking under me my old squadron when old Hucch-mulg was broken to the ranks for sodomizing the General's favorite mare.

Decisive though the Kingdom's victory may have seemed at the time, the Battle Before the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik was not to settle control of the iron mines. Hardly more than a week thereafter, a raging tide of dysentery swept over the victors' camp. Fully one-third of the fifteen thousand soldiers therein were to fall victims to "The Unceasing Torrent", and were thus rendered unfit for battle. A League attack at this time, under the leadership of the B'goshtan General T'Naza, caught the army of the Kingdoms unprepared at Ochthuee Village and there wrought a fearful slaughter upon Vulch'har and Yull' krunkii alike.

Students of the Sixty-Six Years' War are at considerable odds to explain why Lord Thur'kha placed a thousand ill-equipped and poorly motivated barbarian mercenaries in the center of his line at Gurik. Their fate, at the hands of the well-armed and fanatical IVth Legion of the Temple, set the stage for the defeat of the entire League army. One historian, Umppa-Wh'uk of Hurko-La, credits the barbarians' placement to the fact that Lord Thur'kha was drunk on the morning of the battle. Yet another accountant of the battle, Imk'nuVal-Kronk of Ios' twik, holds that one of Thur' kha's aides, in charge of conveying the morning's order of battle to the barbarians' commander, was in the pay of the Yull'krunkki. Whatever the explanation postulated, there can be no confirmation this side of the Underworld, inasmuch as three days after Gurik, Lord Thur'kha was poisoned by a vengeful whore for having preferred the attentions of his orderly to hers'.

If the League had opposed the Puce Fanatics with proper heavy infantry--such as the two Hurko-La brigades that were held in reserve--the Battle Before the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik might well have gone the other way entirely. But, then, to quote an old Shukk aphorism, "Don't (perform an unmentionable act) before you've dropped your (nether garments)."

BOOKS

IF THE STARS ARE GODS
by Gregory Benford & Gordon Eklund, Berkley/Putnam $7.95

GATEWAY
by Frederick Pohl, St. Martins $8.95

CHARIOT OF FIRE
by E.E.Y. Hales, Doubleday $6.95

BOLO
by Keith Laumer, Berkley, $1.5(

SWORDS & ICE MAGIC
by Fritz Lieber, Ace, $1.50

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #6
ed. Terry Carr, Del_Rey, $1.95

IF THE STARS ARE GODS by Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund is one of those type books Arthur Clarke wrote 15 years ago. I don't mean that in any way but as a compliment. Most of Clarke's best work was written then. Benford and Eklund give us a series of stories about Bradley Renolds, Earth's first space hero. While Part One (Mars exploration), and Part Two (alien encounter) are stand alone stories, the latter sections deal with the life systems of Jupiter and are interconnected. This book is for those who like their s-f sprinkled with logical, rational, people, heavy on the theory with begining, middle, and end. You can find all this and more. Serious fiction-recomended.

No one has ever won back to back Hugo and/or Nebulas in the novel category. Maybe this year. Fred Pohl has already won the Nebula with his excellent MAN PLUS, and now we have his 1977 novel, GATEWAY. In most ways, GATEWAY is better than MAN PLUS. Given the circumstances, the characters and plot are plausible. However, those circumstances are rather strange. An artificial asteroid near Venus is discovered. The asteroid, Gateway, contains over nine hundre(pre-programmed, faster-than-light starships left behind by an unknown race called Heechee. The ships for the most part, seem ready for take off. The catch is that you will not know where you go, or if you will return, or what waits when you "pop out"of FTL drive. The reward? Simple, the wealth of a million worlds. One good journey, and your set for lif(Artifacts, tools, anything that gives a clue to the facts behind the Heechee disappearance can net the traveller a tidy sum, then shi] ship out again, seeking the big kill.

I loved this book. I like books that don't solve the big problems, but take care of the characters. In life, we find out what happened to JFK-the man. But why? Maybe my grandson will find out the answer to that one. Fred Pohl deserves a Special Award in my book for writing two excellent books in a row.

CHARIOT OF FIRE by E.E.Y. Hales is one of those rare books that defies any attempts to place it in a specific category. Doubleday has written "a fantasy" across the cover and that is about as close as anyone is going to get. The story is of one Henry Brock and his death. In the well known found-manuscript format, we find a Henry Brock of about 20 minutes dead. Indeed,Henry is filling out a long form given to him by a helpful nun. He is computing the number of times he sinned with his former girlfriend. After due consideration, Henry is assigned the Second level of what appears to be the Hell Dante described clearly. But Henry doesn't like Hell, and when Cleopatra asks him to aid her in a revolution of Upper Hell a against Satan, the book begins to move along. Everyone seems to get into the act. Caesar joins, bringing the mustered forces of Limbo into the bargining table-- a table chaired by, yes, Henry Brock. I can't spoil the ending, but I don't want you to buy this book unless you are curious about myths and religious snicker/snackery. There should be a paperback someday. Try it. A pretty good read..

PAPERBACKS OF NOTE:

BOLO by Keith Laumer is a collection of six stories about those crazy cybertanks we hear about

every now and then. Since the Bolo is somewhat similar to the OGRE, we recomend this book to the readers who might not have heard of Keith Laumer, Ogres, or Bolos. It will be a rewarding experience.

One of the grand men of fantastic literature is Fritz Leiber. Few if any will dispute this, and most will claim to have been influenced by him to some extent or antoher. He is a GREAT writer. For summer, he has given us SWORDS & ICE MAGIC. Included in this book are some of the very best Fafhrd & Gray Mouser stories written. Mr. Leiber's stories help shape the growing field of fantasy literature, and I expect to see the stories in this volume re-written by aspiring writers, and get printed. But remember, Fritz Leiber did it first, and better.

THE BEST SF OF THE YEAR #6 edited by Terry Carr, is the only "Best of.." that truely lives up to its name. There are eleven of the best of the year by Carr's standards, which are high. My own favorite of the year, which wasn't nominated for the Hugo was an incredible tale called "The Eyeflash Miracles" by Gene Wolfe. The other excellent story is the zany "Custer's Last Jump" by Steven Utley & Howard Waldrop in which Custer (of an alternate world) is pitted against an Indian force in fighter planes. The bibliography is very clever. I don't think anyone can afford to miss what is at least the best SF published in the USA and UK.

MOVIES OF NOTE:

If you are one of the three people in the world who has not heard of or seen the movie STAR WARS, please do yourself a favor and go see it before all the prints are scratched up.

JABBERWOCKY-New from two former Monty Pythonites, this movie is slow on pacing, but rich in sets, costumes, and characters. At times, the humor is strained and a bit hard to laugh at, but bits and pieces of scenes have been popping into my mind for three days now. Maybe that is a recomendation in itself--it stays with you.

NEXT MONTH--

I hope to have finished LUCIFER'S HAMMER, the big novel from the dynamic duo--Niven & Pournelle. See you in Miami.

BATTLEFLEET MARS

a review

by Howard Thompson

BATTLEFLEET MARS is SPI's latest science fiction effort. It simulates the revolt of Martian colonists and **asteroid miners** against the Earth corporation. The game is big in that the rules, 40,000+ words of them, are the size of a small novel. The future history, background notes and essential rules are often worked in together. This can make for a lot of reading.

Be warned that this is a review of how it felt to play BFM, not a detailed description of the game. How I felt about the game before and after playtesting dominated all other impressions. Examining the game components before play whetted my imagination and appetite. It looked neat, with lots of neat ideas. But BFM didn't live up to the high expectations its initial impression had created.

After Ben and I had play-tested BFM in the strategic version, the first thing that came to mind was a recent interview with Jim Dunningan in Panzerfaust/Campaign. Jim discoursed long and convincingly on game development budgets and production schedules. How designers were expected to produce well, and on time, was explained. SPI's goal, based on that interview, seems to be to get games finished and out the door on schedule and under budget-all else being deemed a failure. BFM lookes like the kind of 40,000 word game you'd get on average under such design constraints. Another $1,000 and another month might have gotten the rough edges off and produced a great game. All the ingredients of greatness were there.

Don't take this as a negative review of BFM. Mostly I've been left with a sense of disappointment. The Solar Display map, for example, has orbital tracks for the inner planets and Jupiter. You move the planets along their track each turn. Neat, I've always wanted to do a game like that. In play, it just isn't so neat. You use card strips to measure how many months it will take to arrive at a destination, then move the ships/fleets to an appropriate box for the destination. If you measure, it takes three months to get to Vesta from Mars. You then move the ships to the three box on the Vesta arrival chart. So far so good. However, if you change your mind after month one, you have to measure out how far the ships would have gone in a month, measure how many months it'll take to get to the new destination from the estimate point on the Solar Display, and set up the new arrival. Not neat. In a game that mixes concepts of precision with approximation, this may hurt play most of all. When and where ships arrive counts more than anything else. Using approximations do determine those arrivals hurts. The detailed record sheets for fleets don't have a spot for marking start and end points of trips. Annoying when they have so much other information. The problem of approximation is even worse when ships change course several times. The way the game plays, changing course ought to be one of the best tactical tricks (arrive when and where you aren't expected). With a little more time it looks like this could have been cleaned up.

The components are the usual SPI good quality. The Solar Display looks good despite the usual plethora of tables and charts over one third of it. The tactical combat map, not play-tested, is plain yellow on black but probably very serviceable for its purpose. The ship counters are neatly done and there are even individual names for Miner ships, Catapult ships, and Transports, a nice touch. There are detailed record sheets for fleets and for individual ships. The rules are long and detailed, if poorly organized, and there are even more charts and tables that can be detached for play use. The total BFM package is impressive. Your imagination runs ahead to what the game could be if you're an s-f fan.

The political interaction is there, complete with assassins. However, there is no real politics. It's all done with die rolls. You roll dice to see if your assassins can attempt to kill another assassin. You roll for both starting and ending negotiations. You roll dice to end the war when

either Earth or Mars' Morale index gets low enough. Politics that consist of only rolling dice in relation to a series of interrelated charts that control all options and actions, isn't politics. It's a bunch of random events not under the control of players. It would have been just as well to have a big random events chart with die rolls related to morale levels. A series of charts makes it needlessly complicated. What looked neat in a cursory examination, is a bore in play. It does nothing for me to win a game, as I did, by rolling a one on a die and consulting a chart that says 'martian victory'.

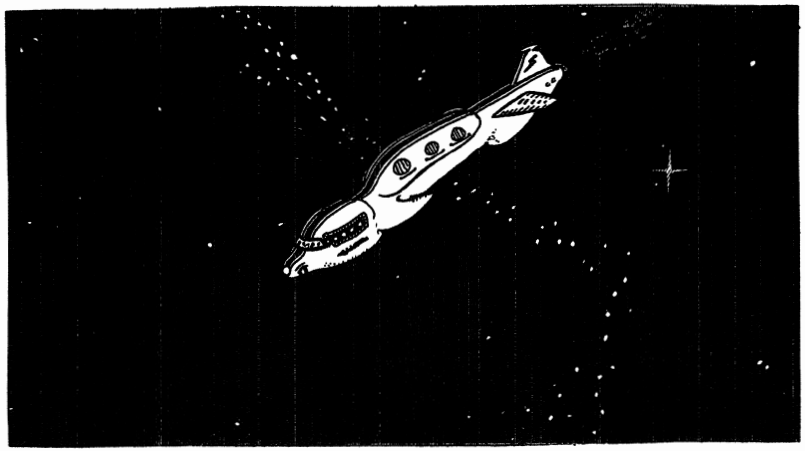
The tactical combat **segment** was not played but looked as if it might be better organized than the strategic level game. SPI seems to do much better on average with their tactical games, and this is probably no exception. You might get your money's worth in the game just from the tactical segment, if that's your bag. The strategic combat was clumsy in that you had to reference two charts. The first tells the percentage of each fleet destroyed, the second tells how many ships it was, given the relative fleet size. It is possible to use the charts to let a smaller fleet do more damage than it can receive, particularly if you use single ships. It seems unrealistic for a single ship to be better in some combats than two ships. I suppose most players are expected to use the detailed tactical module where this wouldn't occur.

A glaring example of incomplete development is in the arrival schedule charts. There are spaces for four month arrivals on all charts. It isn't possible to have more than a three month trip. This isn't even allowed for on the measurer. Yet, there it is on the map. You suspect that late one night at SPI, someone came in and said, "That's as far as we go on BFM, print it," and away it went.

In summary, the game disappointed me because it seemed to promise so much. It isn't a great game, just an average game that may have started out to be great. I'd give it a 6.3-6.5 rating. B.E. Hessel and Redmond Simonsen have design credit for BFM. I suspect they'd have appreciated another month on it. Too much was attempted in one game, given the design/development constraints SPI apparently has. If a less ambitious design had been attempted, the game might have had a completed feel. TSG readers will probably like the game if they like tactical play and don't expect too much, as I did. Anyone willing to fiddle some will find all the basics to work with.

BATTLEFLEET MARS is available from Simulation Publications Inc., 44 E. 23rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10010 for $9 boxed. Rules booklet, Solar Display map, Tactical Display map, two distance measures, record sheets, and 420 play counters.

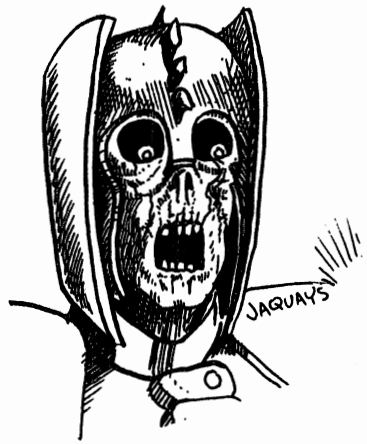
(P.S. to Redmond: Get Jim to go flexible on those design constraints for ambitious projects like BFM, then charge more to cover it it necessary. Science fiction fans and gamers would rather have a $12 great game than a $9 near miss. At least that's what TSG readers tell us in no uncertain terms about <u>our</u> near misses.)



NOMAD GODS

a review

by Robert C. Kirk



This is the second game in the Dragon Pass series, continuing the trend established in WHITE BEAR AND RED MOON. It is a fantasy boardgame, played with 252 unit counters on a colorful 22"x 27" hex-grid mapboard of heavy paper stock. The 72 page rulebook is profusely illustrated by Gene Day with what must be the best artwork of any fantasy game.

The saga portrayed by NOMAD GODS unfolds on the Plains of Prax, located to the Southeast of Dragon Pass. Prax was largely blasted in prehistory during the Gods' War. To this day, it is a mostly barren chapparal. The Dead Place, where all the mana of the once fertile ground was exhausted, is found here. Near the Dead Place is the Sacred Ground, wherein the Earth deities reside in eternal peace. Prax is also where the Block landed--an eminence cube of immortal stone, hurtled across the world when the Mountain of Law exploded during the War of the Gods, to crush the Devil beneath it as it struck.

Don't think Prax is uninhabitable, though. You, as a player, are one of the five major nomadic tribes. Your objective is to gain wealth by obtaining ancient magical properties called Medicine Bundles and by capturing herds from other tribes. You will send emissaries to any of the twenty Altars to ask the help of ancient spirits or even deposed gods. The Founder of your tribe and the holy ancestors will manifest themselves at your call. The Shaman will cause the Death Winds to blow and destroy the enemy. Gain the alliance of any of the ten independent tribes and they will lend their often unusual strengths to your efforts.

Combat is frequent and brutal. It can take the form of a no-holds-barred melee or a rain of arrows and spears from passing skirmishers. Both are handled on one of the two Combat Results Tables by comparing the relative strengths of the opposing forces to the roll of a die. There are special rules for magical combat, but it is handled similarly.

The rules build through a very basic game with just the tribes, to an advanced game in which the tribal deities can be summoned, to the complete game in which all the deities of Prax are available tc the tribes who can **befriend** them and magical combat is allowed. In this game, however, not all of the spirits are benign. Plague can come, as can creatures of chaos, and even a particularly strong and obnoxious tribe of humans.

The game has some cute touches, too. There is the Eternal Battle, for instance, frozen forever in time, but not in space. Randomly drifting across the Plains of Prax, entire clans can be absorbed into the battle. Brave emissaries can be sent to gamble their lives to obtain the aid of a few of the immortal warriors of the Eternal Battle. You may encounter Hyena, who is well known for sitting about and telling lewd jokes all day and will therefore disrupt any stack he is sent atop.

The game is easy to learn. The rules are eminently readable. You will, however, have to make a few arbitrary decisions regarding their interpretation--some words seem to be missing at a couple of points. Most of the game is clear, at any rate. Stacking is allowed with certain restricitions. This can become clumsy in a few of the scenarios, but is at worst a minor annoyance and there doesn't seem to be any way around it.

NOMAD GODS was designed by Greg Stafford. It is available from The Chaosium, P.O. Box 94706, for $9.95. Two to five players can play a balanced game.

OGRE

a review

by William A. Peterson

Fidelity of Simulation ("Realism") 1
Game Mechanics (Playability) 7
Physical Quality 1
Graphics (Artwork) 3
Player's Aids (Bookkeeping) 0
Rules Clarity 9
Game Speed 8
Game Balance 8
Game as a Whole 7

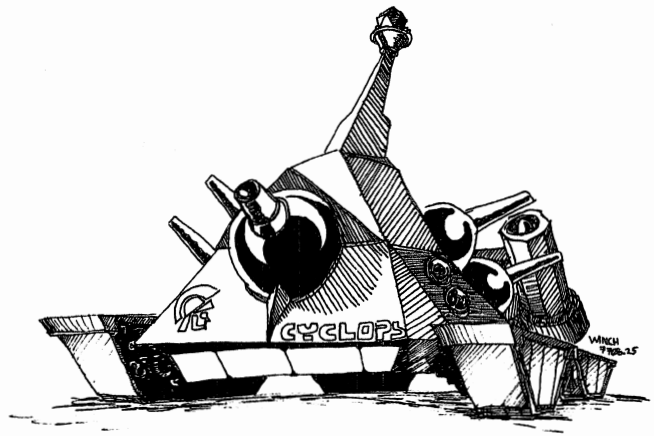
It has often been said, of many different things, that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". This, as can be seen from the ratings above, is certainly true of OGRE!. Going by the average of the other scores, OGRE! should only rate about 4.5 (on a scale of 0 to 10), yet the game gives the impression of being much better than a $2.95 game should. This is probably because I, along with most gamers, am more interested in a good game than a pretty box. Be this as it may, OGRE! is still far from perfect, and I think that an explanation of my ratings will show why.

Fidelity of Simulation: "Realism" is a ridiculous term to use when describing a Fantasy or Science Fiction game, but a game must still have a background, a basic framework governing what takes place during the game. In fact, it was **Steve** Jackson's "Notes on the Ogre" in TSG #9 that convinced me to buy OGRE!. The preface on pages 2 & 3 of the rules booklet further added to this background. It's only after you start reading the rules that problems develop; Powered Armor Infantry, presumably equipped with jet belts, are incapable of crossing any type of terrain except clear; Heavy tanks aren't very heavy (even in relation to conventional units); OGREs can overrun enemy units with devastating effect (especially platoons of infantry with jet belts and 40 mm of armor tougher than steel), but can't climb into a lousy little 500m wide crater; yet, this same kind of crater affords absolutely nothing in the way of cover, concealment and/or protection; and, although everyone in the game is armed with high-power nuclear weapons, there are no additional craters formed, nor can any one attack effect more than one weapon system on the OGRE! (but the OGRE can easily wipe out three platoons of armored infantry). Also, with each hex representing 500m, you'd think the stacking limit might be greater than "1". All this might be nitpicking, but minor details like this detract seriously from the flavor of the game.

Playability: This is one of OGRE's strongpoints. The game mechanics are smooth, if unoriginal (Panzerblitz fans should really like this game). As with most games, all the negative aspects listed under realism become positive aspects here. There is some dirt here, though, especially when shooting at the OGRE's movement points (roll one dice per attacker, 5 or 6 kills one point per attack factor). All in all, however, it is a 'clean' game.

Physical Quality: What do you get for your $2.95? Just from appearances, the answer is 'not much'. OGRE includes a 9"x14" sheet of paper, laughingly called a map, (even given that the format limited them to black & white, couldn't they have put in something more than solid hexes and hexsides?) a 4"x7", 20-page rules booklet,(including a garish, two-color cover illustration, two ads, the preface, the credits, and an example of play amounting to 12 pages of actual rules and charts) 112 unit counters, (black on gray or white; 7/16" square; semi-die-cut, which means you have to cut them out; and including no less than 15 OGREs, somewhat **excessive** since 2 are a match for all the other units combined) and a plastic bag in which to try and store it in (open top, not ziploc-ed). Don't try to play OGRE outdoors on a windy day. The component quality is, however, slightly better than that of Gar-Garouk, produced by Eagle Games (their stuff was so bad, even JAGD-Panther dropped their line).

Graphics: Only the interior illustrations can save OGRE's rating here. The color illustration is in red & black-on white, and looks awful; the map has, for terrain, solid black hexes (craters) and solid black hexsides (rubble) which might as well not be there; and on page 9, the rules are partially obscured by a superimposed picture of an infantryman. At least Gar-Garouk had swamps (and cost $1.95 less, too).



Bookkeeping: The only bookkeeping needed in the game is to record damage to the OGRE. Although a sample damage record is included in the rules, it is up to the player to make his own. A nuisance, but, as the OGRE player has nothing else to do while the defender sets up anyways, it's not too big a problem.

Rules Clarity: OGRE's best point. It even beats STELLAR CONQUEST at this. I had almost no problems understanding the rules, except for page 9 (see GRAPHICS).

Game Speed: This game was intended from the very beginning to be a fast mover, and it is. The maximum number of units on the board is about 50, and this gets whittled down very quickly. Also, with most units having an MA of 2, there's not much to the movement phase. Combat is also over quickly, since the OGRE can out-run and out-range practically every other unit on the board. Although there are a lot of turns per game (about 10-20), the turns only last about 60-120 seconds each (average), making for a very short game.

Game Balance: Here I have a somewhat unusual complaint. The balance between the two sides is basically very good, (at least in the two regular scenarios) so that it is never certain until the last moment who is going to win, (unless one side has made a BIG mistake). The unbalance comes when the defender selects his forces, according to a certain total of attack factors, (i.e.: 1 Mk. III OGRE v.s. 20 inf. factors and 35 "armor" (Non-inf.) factors). Consider: All units move 2 hexes/turns, except OGRE (3MA) and GEVs (4MA+another 4MA after combat). Also, these GEVs have the same range as a heavy tank, 2/3 the defense factor, and half the attack factor,(with the ability to combine attacks) means that the GEVs are incredibly superior to all other non-ORGE units on a per-combat-factor basis. Actually, as it is the only unit which can regularly get a shot off at the OGRE, and have a chance of not being rammed next turn, (in which a Mk. III trades 1/45th of it's movement capability for a 50% disabled, 50% destroyed result) the GEV is probably the best on a per-unit basis. This is the only hint of imbalance in the game, but an important one, (the counter mix doesn't have enough GEVs for a pure GEV force in the Mk.V scenario). Perhaps a remedy is forthcoming. (See elsewhere in this issue--Ed.)

Game as a Whole: Basically, I like OGRE. It is fast, simple, and fun. It's bad points, while annoying, can be ignored. Personally, I would rather pay $5.00 for a game and have it done with some attention to quality (especially fully die-cut counters, and maybe some imagination used when drawing the map) then pay a paltry sum for a paltry game, (besides OGRE and Gar-Garouk, Atlantis, 12,500 B.C. by Excalibure also springs to mind). But, OGRE as a game, is well worth $2.95 and a bit of aggravation.

WAR OF THE RING

a review

by Tony Watson

The Lord of the Rings trilogy has fostered a sizable number of games and rules for miniatures, all of which have been eagerly snapped up by the fantasy wargame market. Mr. Tolkien's world, and the events transpired within, sparked the imagination of many a gamer who sought to recreate the epic battles of the books. Some of the more unique **attempts** to bring Tolkien's masterpiece to life in game form have been those that have wedded the strategic military situation of the books to the tried and proven game system of the favorite, DIPLOMACY. The no luck, simplistic system has been modified to depict (in the designer's eye) the situation of T.A. 3018 as the hosts of Sauron mustered to battle against the forces of good, then regain the Ring held by the hobbit, Frodo.

None of these efforts have gained much attention beyond the environs of the postal DIPLOMACY hobby; their publication and play being restricted in a large part to amateur play-by-mail 'zines.

But Fantasy Games Unlimited has tried to change all that with their latest offering, WAR OF THE RING.

WOTR is meant to be a strong commercial effort. It comes in a nice box. The cover art, by Tim Kirk, depicts a group of Orcs about to charge an army of good guys. The 22"x21" mapboard is mounted and full color. The basic beige is augmented by blue for bodies of water, burn-orange for mountains and green for woods. Only mountains and rivers have any bearing on play. As in regular DIPLOMACY, provinces are irregularly shaped, each bordering on a various number of others. As far as I can ascertain, the map is faithful to the geography of the trilogy. There are, however, some glaring ambiguities. In one case, borders and a river seem to form an un-named province.

The die cut counters come in two colors; black on jade green for the forces of good (collectively known as Gondor) and black on red for the armies of evil, referred to as Mordor. The counters each bear a number; one, two, or three corresponding to the strength of that army. Certain of these will bear the name of the province they began in. This is a nice touch which allows the players to keep track of the various contingents of the game. Other counters represent the important personages in the novel.

The rules are contained in a sixteen page rule book that is rather drab compared to the rest of the game. The rules are laid out fairly well but the game suffers grievously from having no examples of the more confusing rules.

The game pits two players, one as Gondor and the other as Mordor, in a battle for control of the One Ring. The mechanics of play should be familar to DIPLOMACY Fans. Dice are not used to resolve combat; pure strength and the right decisions determine the outcome. Each turn the players must write an order for each of their armies. This can be either to move, to support another unit or hold, all standard functions from DIPLOMACY. In addition there is a fourth order (a variant of moving) termed attacking which draws strength away from the attacked unit, equal to the value of the attacker. In general, the unit which can bring the greatest force (its strength plus that of any supporting units) will gain the province in question. Forces of equal strength will standoff. Any defeated army in a province is dislodged and must retreat to an adjacent province. Unlike standard DIPLOMACY, where each unit has a value of one, some armies in WOTR have strengths of two and a special Mordorian army has a power of three.

Other interesting rules cover fortresses, supply centers that defend themselves with a strength of one when unoccupied and doubles the strength of any occupying armies, and fleets, which are simply a way to convert existing armies to water movement.

Fortunately, the designer has placed a high emphasis on the actions of individuals. These are represented by separate counters bearing the name of the being represented. The Mordorians have nine such units, the Ringwraighs or Nazgul, and the Gondorians have Gandalf, Strider, and the three hobbits, Frodo, Merry and Pippin. The Nazgul, Strider, and Gandalf all have a "quasi-military value" when operating with other armies. This rule is not as clear as it should be.

The hobbits are a special case. They move slower than other individuals but their counters are not placed on the map unless they are captured by a Gondorian army (by retreating a unit they are with, or by ending the turn with them unescorted). The Ring can only be detected by the Nazgul however, so a player might capture a Ring-bearing hobbit and not know it.

Players maintain their armies by holding supply centers (certain provinces are identified as such). Possessions of a supply center allows the maintainence of one army. Loss of supply centers results in the removal of a corresponding number of armies. Thus the game is zero-sum in nature. There will always be twenty-four units (the number of supply centers) but the number each side has will fluctuate with the on-board military situation.

Quite appropriately, the Ring is the focus of the game. The Mordorian will usually win a military victory, but he must prevent the Ring from getting to the Crack of Doom and to do this he must eventually pull his Nazgul away from spearheading his drives and send them searching for the hobbits. The Mordorian win by destroying Gandalf, Strider and the two Elven armies, or by getting the ring to his large army. The Gordorian player wins by getting the Ring to the Crack of Doom, or by having Gandalf or Strider put on the Ring, becoming Ringlord, and fighting his way to Barad-dur. The good guys best shot is sneaking a hobbit over to Mordor and getting the ring into the Crack of Doom. The Mordorians will probably have the upper hand in the military situation. This indirect approach is probably the best game wise, as well as being true to the books. Mordor can defeat the field armies of Gondor, but he must direct a large portion of his efforts, especially those of the Nazgul, to searching for the Ring.

Examining the game from a critical point of view is interesting. The game plays well as game, but the use of a DIPLOMACY type system in a game of this nature is questionable. The combat system was orginally designed for multiplayer use, but with two players tends to eliminate surprises. More importantly, the games stresses the economic aspects of the war through the use of supply centers. The wars of the books were never economic in nature; they were basic conflicts between good and evil. The thought of the Elves fighting for Mordor simply because Lorien was lost to an orcish army is somewhat ludicrous. The attempt in this particular game was a good one; I just don't feel this game system is really appropriate to the subject matter.

This consideration, coupled with ambiguous rules and map, causes this game to come close, but never quite achieve its aim.

WAR OF THE RING was designed by Thomas Drake and is available from Fantasy Games Unlimited, P.O. Box 182. Roslyn N.Y. 11576 for $10.00 + .50 postage or $8.00 + .50 postage sans the box.

TUNNELS & TROLLS

a review

by Robert C. Kirk

TUNNELS & TROLLS, with a $3.00 price ticket compared to $10.00 for Dungeons & Dragons, is the game an unsuspecting newcomer to fantasy gaming is likely to buy. Unfortunately, to someone who has never played D&D, T&T is practically unplayable.

The rules book starts with general guidelines for digging a dungeon (or tunnel). It suggests that you let your imagination run wild when it comes to stocking the dungeon with traps and treasures, magical items and monsters. I would like to point out that for anyone never previously exposed to a fantasy role playing game, this requires more imagination than the normal human has. The result is a boring dungeon.

The guidelines for designing monsters are fine, but if you've never been in a dungeon and actually fought a monster, your new pets are likely to prove unkillable. As to traps, which are supposed to be clever and devious, no guidelines are given. You may know that there are trolls in the tunnels, but an example or two would be more helpful down there.

The character section works well and can be understood. The combat section is also easy enough to figure out once you latch onto the detail that on the weapons table "D&A" means, respectively, the number of dice you roll and the extra bonus strength you add to them--this is not actually stated anywhere.

The object of the game is to advance your character by obtaining experience points. This is clear enough, except for that business of designing the tunnels wherein the character gets experience.

Before going into the tunnels, your character needs supplies (apparently the character arrives stark naked at the store, which is found at the entrance of every tunnel complex). A player has a certain amount of gold to spend for his needs. For items costing less than a single gold piece, he receives change in the form of silver or copper coins, but we aren't told how much silver or copper equals one gold coin. Then again, if you buy a piton hammer (for driving pitons into walls) it costs you 5 gold pieces and weighs 25; the same hammer is listed in the weapons section as weighing 50 and costing 3 gold pieces. You can even buy armor for your horse, although you do not have a horse, cannot buy one, and could not get him into the dungeon anyway.

Magicians can buy Deluxe Magic Staff, fabricated by a 17th level wizard which "retains the ability to cast any spell known to the owner, even if the original owner dies". Wasn't the 17th level wizard the original owner? Does this give wizards the power to cast any spell at any level--even those they haven't learned yet? You'll have to decide for yourself. Why not design your own game?

There are 17 levels of magic. Each time a spell is cast it drains the user of a certain amount of his strength. This is a clever section. The spells have very cute names. Some of them are nearly incomprehensible as to their effects. It seems obvious that the designer already knew how to play, thought all his readers did too and felt he could leave out extraneous matter like explanations.

There is a supplement to TUNNELS & TROLLS, but it doesn't help a whole lot. It does give a time scale, which wasn't in T&T. It suggests a method of generating treasures, fills out the section on armor and charisma, and presents a better way of determining if you can hit anything with slings, bows, and the like. It also attempts to clear up some of the questions about spells. It'll set you back another $1.50.

All in all, T&T sounds like an interesting game. Too bad a beginner cannot play the thing unless he goes out and gets DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, especially since T&T was designed because D&D cost so much. If you're already familiar with FRP games, for $3.00 you can probably find something you'd like to incorporate into your own games. If you have never played--try something else.

TUNNELS & TROLLS, designed by Ken St. Andre, is published by Flying Buffalo, Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252.

LETTERS

DEAR EDITOR,

Re Shayne Gad's article TSG#10--

I hate to play the spoilsport when wargamers are having fun doing what they do best, bending the rules; but some of the dirty tricks mentioned seem dubious. For example, burning off one of your own 1 pop/1 i.u. colonies to deprive another player of a planet. If someone tried that on me, I would politely but firmly (well, firmly anyway) point out that the relevant rule states that the planet is uninhabitable if the colony is burned off by an opponents' ships. And despite the fact that some people are their own worst enemies, I suggest that all that occurs is the useless destruction of one CT and contents. There are ways around this however. The population of conquered colonies, for example now becomes rather useful (in a gory sort of way). Or, you could leave 1 pop/1 i.u. colonies, where a third pary might just happen by them and finish them off (pity about that!)

I also have qualms about the population shuttle tactic. Oh, its permitted by the rules; I checked that carefully; but I don't see how shuffling people from one overcrowded planet to another would help at all (in 'real life'). I feel that this represents a bit of oversight on the designer's part. Who, after all, would emigrate people from one overcrowded planet to another? (Wargamers, that's who. If there's anything for them in it!) Logically, a planet would either be sending emigrants or receiving them, not both. Perhaps there's a way to codify this in a simple rule; but I haven't thought of a fool-proof one yet.

Ed Beauregard
Vancouver, B.C.

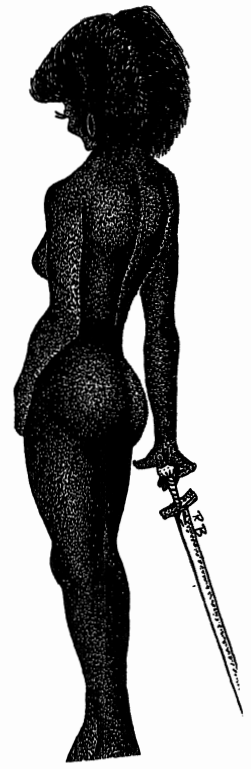
Correction from TSG #11--

There is one typographical error which appeared on Page 36 that makes one paragraph sound odd. It is in the eighth paragraph, that reads: "(2) Make computers for the fleets..." It should read: (2) Make counters for the fleets..."

Jay Reese
Eugene, Or.

The fifth paragraph of my review of OGRE in TSG #11 reads: "The Ogre's sole objective is to survive..." It should read: "The Ogre's sole objective is to destroy the command post. In order for the defenseless command post to survive..." The portion underlined was omitted in the magazine.

Robert C. Kirk
New Carrolton, Md.



On the subject of computer games, in the last paragraph of the letter (TSG #9) the following statement was made:

"One more point: I disagree that computer-moderated games are more demanding, and that computer-opponents are more intelligent or tougher. Perhaps conceptualizing a computer simulation is more difficult for the individual player, but I think a board version of most such games would be easier to play (excepting the paperwork, which is merely tiresome). Try computerizing Strategy I or Tunnels and Trolls sometime. It doesn't work."

This is simply not true. The only point made which is valid is that computer opponents are not necessarily more intelligent than a human. The only reason for this is that at present a computer is only as intelligent as the person who programed it. Any selection a computer makes, with the exception of generating a random number, which can be done with a die or a set of numbered chits, can be traced through the program by a human who would arrive at the same answer. The only difference is that the computer would arrive at the answer thousands of times faster. The computer is not more intelligent but definitely tougher. As for computer simulations being more difficult to play, not so either. With the right equipment computers can be programed so that all that is required is to input the moves of each player and the computer eliminates the "tiresome paperwork".

Finally, I have never heard of Strategy I, so I cannot say anything about it, but I do know a little about Tunnels and Trolls and from what I know, it would not be impossible to computerize. To illustrate this, I will use as an examply the game Buffalo Castle, which was reviewed in the same issue. It is a solitary game designed to be played with T&T rules. The review said that the game was a flow chart, in booklet form. Since all computer programs, whether games, scientific or otherwise, are flow charts, computerizing is simple. The full T&T game would only require a larger and more complex, though still possible, flow chart.

Anthony Giancola
Upper Marlboro, Md.

TSG# 11 comment---

Review of STARWEB. There is only one little thing that bothers me. It appears to be the second time it has happened, and I mentioned it last time. Would you please tell your reviewers or ask your editor to edit out any comments about MIMEOGRAPH? I sold my mimeograph machine 4 years ago. NOTHING PUBLISHED BY FLYING BUFFALO IS OR HAS BEEN MIMEOGRAPHED IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS. I know, it is a little thing, but it bothers me a LOT. The original Starweb rules were printed REDUCED OFFSET. In trying to do our own printing, we have had our problems with getting competent press operators. But even "poor offset printing" gives a much different impression then "mimeograph". PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE do not let anyone comment about any "mimeographed" rules by Flying Buffalo. (But thanks for all the rest of the review.)

Review of Deathtrap: Please tell Steve Jackson that DED is not sexist. He's not reading it carefully enough. He mentions the two situations which offer amorous adventure for males, and comments that there is nothing in it for females. Agreed the goddess of Love has little to offer female characters (but she does double their charisma). But Ursla is bisexual. Please note that the situation never mentions male or female.

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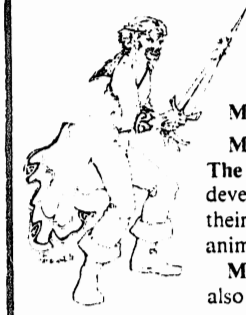

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